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SEA STORY® ANTHOLOGY

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BY THE WORLD'S GREATEST SEA STORY AUTHORS

Ernest Haycox : Lincoln Colcord · Joseph C. Lincoln . Tom Roan : John T. Rowland
Fred R. Bechdolt . T. Jenkins Hains : Albert R. Wetjen : J. J. Bell . James F. Dwyer

SEA STORY ANTHOLOGY

A collection of outstanding stories of the sea

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THE EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Many an author can write a sea story for a landsman, but very few can get away with one for a sailor.

So, lets look over the roster of this book and see who our authors are—in relation to the sea.

LINCOLN COLCORD was born at sea, off Cape Horn and is descended from a family of seafarers extending back five generations. His boyhood was spent with his father, a sea captain, mostly voyaging from Boston to China and trading in the China Sea. We're very proud to reprint THE LEAK, by Lincoln Colcord, with its beat, beat, beat of the pumps of a leaky old bark that fought a No'easter across the Atlantic. You'll sympathize with the men who went down to the sea in sailing ships.

JOHN CROSBY LINCOLN'S father, grandfather and great-grandfather were seamen. His father died when he was one year old, but in summers, back he went to Cape Cod, and "rode the stage coach from Harwick to Chatham." He won many awards and the appearance of a Lincoln sea story in the Saturday Evening Post, where he appeared quite regularly, always caused great comment. The humor that made Captain Eri famous tangs the tale of THE MARE AND THE MOTOR with its salt.

ALBERT R. WETJEN—what a man—ran away to sea when he was 14, was shipwrecked twice and was a member of the crew that took the Sultan of Zanzelias as prisoner of war to St. Helena. He sailed, travelled and freighted all around the world and then settled down on our West Coast, near the sea, of course, and won the Wm. O. Henry Memorial Award in 1926. His writing was voluminous and every story was as interesting as CAPTAIN JONES which we offer you.

JAMES FRANCIS DWYER was born in New South Wales and touched almost every country in the world in his wanderings. He knew the sea as few other men did and loved it intensely. THE ISLE OF DOOM is a good story, and one that will make you think!

We could go on and on—but space stops us—telling stories about these famous writers—about FREDERICK R. BECHDOLT who shared his love of the sea with an intense love of the West; T. J. JENKINS HAINS whose character pictures of the men who follow the flying spray have become a must with lovers of sea stories; TOM ROAN, as virile and exciting as Jack London; J. J. BELL whose stories of whales and whalers are world famous; JOHN T. ROWLAND, not only an authority of the sea, but an excellent dramatist as well as IN THE INTEREST OF THE OWNERS will attest; ERNEST HAYCOX, another western-sea story writer whose stories are features of the Saturday Evening Post and of Colliers; DON WATERS a stimulating, dramatic writer of exciting sea stories.

We've caulked the book with old songs, old shantys (Chanteys, if you are more modern), and old jokes. We know you'll enjoy this adventure into nostalgia with us. The nostalgia of the sea!

The Editor.

UNDER SEALED ORDERS

BY FREDERICK R. BECHDOLT

Walters, like a great many others to-day, was bemoaning the fact that all romance and adventure was dead. Standing on the street corner with a friend before going home for the night, they were arguing the point. As they stood there, motley processions from the four corners of the earth passed—a turbaned lascar, a Chinese girl in silken trousers, a Greek pawnbroker, while out in the street a Hebrew peddler urged his gaunt horse, and a group of Japanese officers, from a visiting man-of-war, looked curiously about them from a touring car.

Then a friend of Martin's came along and spoke of looking for a third mate. Walters, who was working in the freight department of the W. R. & N. R. R., finally made up his mind to try for the berth. He was successful after an unusual test, and finally went aboard the Bowhead, *which was about to sail "Under Sealed Orders."*

The author has, in the following, woven the plot of intrigue into a series of dramatic phases which will enthrall the reader whether he wills it or not. It is essentially a man's story.

MARTIN and I had stopped on the corner where our ways diverged, and now he was about to go home to his wife while I would have my evening as usual alone. It was springtime; the afternoon had been warm; the smells of salt water had floated clear up Market Street from the city front—into the great, crowded room where I toiled at figures endlessly. I had told myself with bitterness, many times that day, that I, of all men, had no business writing among a throng of pallid clerks; and now the sight of Martin, placid, contented, going home, fanned my restlessness again. I had nowhere in particular to go and nothing in particular to do—until I resumed my place in my little rut at nine o'clock to-morrow morning.

Then Martin said: "Did you ever notice how

much color and how many different kinds of people there are on this corner? It's a wonderful place—a place to start adventures."

The crowds were hurrying in four directions, motley processions recruited from the four corners of the world. I saw a turbaned lascar, a Chinese girl in silken trousers, and a Greek pawnbroker among the people of paler races on the sidewalk. Out in the street, a Hebrew peddler urged his gaunt horse, with shrill cries, before a purple limousine where a fragile beauty sat under a cut-glass vase of orchids. A group of Japanese officers, off a visiting man-of-war, looked curiously about them from a touring car.

And I said: "Color! Pshaw! It's all drab. Adventure! Say, what chance is there for adventure now—when things move in grooves? It's all arranged; every man's a cog in a machine, with the same things to do every day, and there isn't a new place in the whole world."

That started me, for I was thinking of my own case; and I talked for a good five minutes about the freight department of the W. R. & N. "Same old story day in and day out, and Sundays I go cruising around the bay—or if we feel real doggish we sail around the Farallones." That was the way I wound up, but Martin laughed.

"You never should have gone into railroad's offices," he said, and would have begun giving me advice had not Tommy Dalton, who owns a launch and tugboat company, come along. I knew him, only by sight, from my yachting experience, but Martin and he were intimates, and he let my friend button-hole him.

"Well," he said, when they had been talking together for a few moments, "I've got to get on. I'm looking for a mate."

"Didn't know you were shipping crews," Martin laughed. "You ought to find one easy enough, though, in these times."

"This," said Tommy Dalton, "is for a friend, and he's particular. It's"—he hesitated and then lowered his voice—"a particular case. He wants just one kind of a man for a third mate's job—boat's officer, you know—and they're sailing under sealed orders. I promised him——" He nodded to us and hurried on his way.

"There you are!" Martin chuckled. "A third mate. Sealed orders. And you still maintain that life's all arranged."

"Life is—for me, anyhow," I growled.

"Go hunt up Tommy and get that third mate's berth. You're qualified for it." Martin grinned. "See what those sealed orders mean. Well, here comes my car."

And so he left me. I went slowly down the street, wishing with all my heart that I could follow his laughing advice. My position meant nothing to me beyond my bare living, and I had been realizing for a year now that I made a big mistake in taking it. On Sundays, when I was aboard the yacht—whose owner had made me skipper—I came near to really living, especially if we had a bit of unexpected weather. Sometimes I got a genuine thrill at an amateur boxing tournament. Otherwise it was figures, three meals, and a bed, and then more figures—with fifty wan young men surrounding me, all penned in like myself.

I ate my dinner as usual alone in a little place where prices were very moderate, for I had to finance carefully in order to keep up my dues in the athletic club and hold up my end in the yachting. It seemed to me to-night that the restaurant was going downhill like the rest of the world, and by the time I had finished I knew that I was genuinely off my feed.

Then I found myself thinking lazily of Tommy Dalton hunting for a third mate, and I kept saying over and over to myself, "Sealed orders." It was taking hold of me, just as the smell of salt water had taken hold of me during the afternoon.

It was a ladies' night at the unpretentious athletic club, so I didn't go there, but started for my room.

I had quarters in one of those double houses which line the streets between Van Ness and Fillmore; two bay windows and one flight of steps to every one of them, and "Furnished Rooms to Let" placarded on three walls out of four. The hallway smelled of boiled cauliflower, and the night air throbbed with various inharmonies—a tenor solo, "canned"; a march of Sousa's, mechanically rendered through the medium of a player piano; a mandolin attempt at "On the Mississippi." I found that there was nothing new on hand to read, save the evening paper. I went over it four times, and finally—in desperation—scanned the financial page. I found news there—"Railroads Retrenching," was the head that caught my eye, and, following the story, I learned that the big transcontinental lines, of which the W. R. & N. was one, were getting ready to cut down their forces. I knew what that meant; and, picturing the panic which the announcement would bring to those pallid young men around me in the downtown office, I began to think of my own case. My restlessness returned. Why wait for my discharge? Better to look about me now and get new work. Again I recalled Martin's jesting advice. I could not abide those four walls now, so I set forth to walk the streets, with the thought of Dalton's third mate for company.

It got to be an argument in which I reasoned against my desire. Why not go? The railroad meant nothing to me, and I meant nothing to the institution, and there was no one depending on me; no one here, excepting my acquaintances and my landlady, who wouldn't even know that I had gone. I hadn't any reasonable ground on which to oppose the proposition of taking a wild chance.

I began thinking of to-morrow—the work; and the next day, the work; and so on—until the blue envelope came inclosing my discharge. This roused me to a sort of rebellion, and when I finally walked into a cigar stand and asked for the telephone directory, my tone made the clerk look up at me with a startled expression.

I found Tommy Dalton's home number, and so I got his street address. Within a half hour I was standing at his front door and asking him if he had that third mate. He looked upon me with eyes which were frankly puzzled.

"Because," I went on, "if you haven't, I'd like the berth."

"You?" he said, and that was all, but the emphasis was unmistakable.

"Surely," I nodded. "I'm good enough for the job. I learned seamanship ten years ago on a voyage to Honolulu before the mast; and I've studied navigation—and there's my yachting."

"I know. I understand that part of it all right." He was still frowning. "But——" He paused and regarded me at some length in silence.

"Well?" I asked.

"Well, it isn't an ordinary case." He smiled.

"I know that, or it wouldn't be sealed orders. That's why I want it. Look here!" I went on to tell him of my reasons.

When I was in the midst of them he seemed to make up his mind. I was saying something about yachting and boxing being the only real life that I had tasted for this long time back. "So—you can hold your end up in a fight," said he. "All right, you can make a try for the berth. What I mean, I'll give you a card and you can take it to Lopez. He'll be the one to decide." He pulled a card from his pocket and wrote a few lines on the back of it.

"Take that to Lopez, at the All Nations on Pacific Street. And don't mention the matter to any one."

"If I get the berth, I'd want to tell Martin," I broke in.

"All right, Martin, but no one else. Good night."

So I departed with the card, and my heart was beating as fast as if I were a boy—for I had the unknown before me.

II.

Pacific Street is the home of the Barbary Coast, and though the place has changed because of reform and fashionable slummers, the All Nations dance hall remains a relic of the days when the street used to entertain the mates and harpooners of whalers, the hunters from sealing schooners, and crews from sailing ships. I opened its door and saw a long, low room with an alcove for a bar. The roar of deep voices filled the interior, rough voices that came from great, hairy chests. Through the diapason of oaths and rude laughter I heard the strains of two accordions; and I saw a whirl of dancers, mulattos, Mexicans, Greeks, Portuguese, and men of whiter skins; they were swinging women of as many races as themselves, and doing it with an abandon that made the very walls tremble. A nice place for a clerk!

In the alcove, under a fog of smoke from pipes and cigarettes, a long line of men stood before the bar. Kanaka, Cape Verde Islander, Irishman, and Swede, they banged their fists on the counter and shouted invitations to one another to drink. As I came among them, I noticed many tattooed emblems—a pair of hands clasped, an American flag, an eagle, a serpent, a ship under full sail—adorning bare arms and peeping out from under loosened shirt fronts. And the talk was sprinkled with sea phrases. Yet these men were not common sailors; nor were they of the class to which licensed officers belong. They were too arrogant in their roughness for the former; and for the latter, too crude in their self-assertion.

Then my eyes went back to the bar, where there hung two crossed shreds of the baleen as it comes from the whale's jaws, a seal pup's skin, a brass harpoon, and a pair of carved walrus tusks. It came to me that Lopez's customers must belong to the caste which was strong, back in the early nineties, the adventurous and restless steerage crews who wielded harpoons or rifles hunting whale or seal. I wondered how it came about that he had so many of them here at a time when there was not a sealing schooner in the Pacific, and no more than two whalers ever sailing in a single season north of Bering Straits.

The bartender was confronting me now, and I asked for Lopez. He called a fat Portuguese who eyed me with glinting suspicion until I handed him my note of introduction. This he read slowly, nodding once or twice to himself; then asked me half a dozen questions regarding my knowledge of seamanship and navigation which I answered easily enough. He was standing behind the bar, with both elbows implanted upon it, his chin in his hands, and the heavy lids drooping so that his eyes were two mere slits.

"Hi, Tom!" His voice was even, and so soft that it was like silk. "Throw thees feller out!"

I saw a huge ruffian in his shirt sleeves, with a broken nose and cauliflower ear, detach himself from a group with whom he had been talking and start for me like a dog who has been whistled up. As he came he lowered his cropped head, and both his fists swung before his burly chest. I realized that he was going to carry out that order if he could.

The suddenness with which the situation had materialized, the utter unexpectedness of anything like this, left me half dazed for a second, perhaps, and during that interval I got one more fleeting glimpse of Lopez standing behind the bar with his chin still implanted in his two hands, his eyes like

two slits under the heavy lids. I knew it was time for me to be acting unless I wanted to be thrown out on the sidewalk in an ignominious heap. That knowledge brought all my blood leaping through my body, but it seemed to clear my head. I was as alert as I have ever been in my life. I forgot the office; I forgot my drab existence; my decent clothes; my position in life among those who never fight with bare hands.

I am a pretty good boxer—I have a medal that I won once in the club—but I realized that this was no case of science; it was a case of landing the first blow. I managed to keep my hands down to my sides and to feign an appearance of absolute unpreparedness, which deceived my opponent nicely enough; for he did not even smile, but had a look of weariness, as one who performs a dreary detail, a bit of work which has grown monotonous from constant repetition. I let him come on; and then—abruptly I straightened up, bringing my hands where they belonged.

It took him cleanly by surprise. He was within arms' length of me, and he did the best he could to make up for lost time. He swung a vicious blow. I felt the wind whistle against my jaw as I jerked my head to one side and leaped into him, both hands going at once.

My right caught him under the chin and my left found him amidships. He staggered back. The blows ought to have put him out of commission entirely. Instead of that, they had merely shaken him. Already he was coming at me again.

This time we met pretty much like two charging bulls—for I am a fairly sizable man myself, a good deal heavier than I look—and we were within ten pounds of even weight at the outside. His big, gnarled fist thudded against my short ribs and jarred me from top to toe. I missed my own swing entirely; but managed to leap back just in time to keep from being infolded in his arms.

Now I began to box more carefully; and I remember how, during the moment of sparring that followed, I heard the two accordions keeping up their blare of ragtime and the tramp of feet in the dance hall. Evidently it took more than a fight to disturb the routine of the All Nations.

My burly opponent contented himself with cautious fiddling for a moment or two, but grew impatient—or perhaps he felt that his prestige was impaired by not having already disposed of me—and he made a third rush. I was ready for it, for now my breath was coming evenly once more, and all my faculties were keyed up. I let him come close. His arms flew out—I uppercut with every ounce of strength that I possessed. I struck as if I were trying to lift an ox from his feet.

He reeled, and that was all.

But in the instant of his helplessness I had the presence of mind to deliver another punch. It caught him in the plexus. He went, writhing, to the floor.

I stood back to get my breath.

"All right." It was the silky voice of Lopez, and I glanced around. He had not changed his position at all; but his eyes were a little wider now, and I saw a bare flicker of something like admiration under his heavy lids. "You'll do, my frien'," he said softly. "Come weeth me."

For an instant I had to battle with my own rage. I had not bargained for any proceeding of this sort—but I remembered what Dalton had said about my ability to fight and all my eagerness returned. I followed him into a little office which opened from the rear of the alcove. He sat down before a desk and opened a drawer from which he drew an automatic revolver and a pair of brass knuckles.

"Your tools," he said quietly. "Now remember wot I tell you; w'en the next man comes for you, don' wait for heem, but get heem w'en he ees not raidy. You do not fight for fon on sheep-board, onderstan', my frien'?"

I picked up the brass knuckles slowly, and my face must have shown my distaste, for Lopez shook his head. "They save breakin' your 'ands," he said gravely. I pointed to the revolver. "Yais," he went on softly. "Mebbe eet will be very nice to 'ave thees gon, too."

I hesitated, fingering the weapon, and I saw his velvet black eyes regarding me intently. "Well," I asked, "what ship is it?"

"The *Bowhead*," he answered, in a half whisper. "An' go on board to-night. Een the morning you can sign."

"The *Bowhead!*" I exclaimed, remembering the grim tales which I had heard of her. "Why, she's an auxiliary whaler!" But Lopez was smiling, shaking his head again.

"Don' worry. Thees ain't whaling. Plenty of mates on 'and for that weethout trouble at all. Mebbe you got some 'ard men to handle an' some rough stuff. But mebbe"—he laid his dark hand on my knee—"you mak' a beeg stake." He nodded vigorously.

On second thought, I knew he must be telling the truth about the venture, for Dalton would not be shipping mates on a whaling voyage. I picked up the revolver and knuckles, stuffing them into my pockets. While I was doing this the bartender came to the door and whispered a few words at which Lopez looked up quickly. I saw a man glancing toward us from before the bar. He was apparently a Portuguese, a thin-faced, pock-marked man, and it seemed to me that there was something furtive in his eyes, as if he had started on a venture whose outcome might even now be hanging in the balance. Lopez rose and followed the bartender into the outer room.

I saw the stranger hand a card which Lopez read as carefully as he had read the one which I had

given him. In the midst of the reading he raised his head and peered into the dance hall. The whirling couples were flashing by there; the stamp of feet and the semibarbaric music were drowning the noise of the sailors' voices. Yet, at one quick gesture from the fat Portuguese, two men detached themselves from the women whom they had been swinging and came slouching into the barroom; big men and very much like the fellow Tom who was even now reviving in a corner from my knock-out. One of them closed in on either side of the stranger, and Lopez nodded. Before the man could lift a hand he was down, and before he had more than struck the floor the two bullies were punishing him in the time-worn shipboard fashion according to which, boots serve the purpose of fists. They battered him into a limp, insensate lump and dragged him out upon the sidewalk.

"He wanted your job," Lopez said quietly, and while I was still wondering what manner of berth this must be whose unsuccessful candidates got such treatment, the Portuguese went on in a more businesslike tone: "To-night you go aboard. She lays off Meiggs' wharf. A launch ees waiting. Geev the skipper thees." He handed me a card with a few lines in writing on the back of it.

III.

"Strictly O. K. Lopez." I read that terse recommendation on the card which the Portuguese had given me, and I felt a genuine deep thrill, the first tingling of that sort which I had experienced since I had given up the sea to sweat over figure columns. I was on the electric car on my way to Meiggs' wharf, the only passenger, and it lacked less than an hour of midnight. I stared out of the window, speculating as to what lay before me, trying to couple the recent happenings with some logical chain of future events, and when I realized that my seamanship and navigation qualifications had been slurred over in an examination whose most rigid test was fighting, I tasted that pleasurable thrill again.

There came other thoughts—the revolver and the brass knuckles in my pocket; the man who had tried for my berth and had been kicked into insensibility—and even these ugly reminders, prophecies of grim days and nights which lay before me, did not cool my exaltation. In fact, they only sharpened my curiosity. Where were we sailing and on what errand? I could not answer; the seven seas were outside the Heads, and whether my course lay in lazy, tropic waters or among the ice packs, I had no idea. The long room with its dull routine was now like another world, forgotten; already the All Nations and Lopez lay behind me. There remained —somehow it persisted in following me now, accompanying me as a companion—the picture of that furtive, pock-marked face as I had seen it before the two dance-hall roughs closed in to do their thug work—a lean, swarthy face, with eyes like polished jet. I was still thinking of it as I left the car at the end of the line and hurried through the darkness to Meiggs' wharf.

It was not a pleasant spot to find at night, for the lights were few and the neighborhood is one of vacant lots and lumber yards, an ideal place for hold-ups. But I encountered no one until I was out on the dock near to the lookout station which commands a view of the Golden Gate. The whirling beacons which mark the harbor mouth were flashing intermittently, throwing paths of radiance upon the dark waters; and the wharf lamps glowed red and green upon the black tide as it sucked and gurgled against the piles. Out in the stream I distinguished the lights of two or three vessels riding at anchor; and for the moment it seemed to me that there was no one on hand to meet me. Suddenly, out of the night, a thin voice came:

"Well, fellow, lookin' for anybody?" The note of challenge was unmistakable, and I stopped as abruptly as though it had been bass instead of piping soprano. I looked around me, seeing no one, but finally my eyes lit upon the speaker. I had been staring over his head up to this time, and if he hadn't chosen to advance I doubt whether I would have found him so soon. Now he stooped and picked up an oilskin coat which had been smothering the rays of a lantern.

He was standing beside a cluster of fender piles, a tow-headed youth of some twelve or fourteen years. His circular face wore an uncompromising expression as he looked up at me; but when I asked him whether there was a launch standing by for the *Bowhead*, the expression changed at once, and he nodded.

"Sure!" said he. "Over there in the slip. They're waitin' for yo'." And he preceded me, lighting the way. "Here's yo'r party, Jake!" he cried, as we reached the inner edge of the dock. A blond-haired man thrust his head out of the heretofore darkened cockpit, while a gruff voice bade my conductor hold his noise. "You Henry!" the gruff voice went on as I climbed aboard. "Cast off them lines and look alive and—mind ye—stay ashore!"

The engine was throbbing before Jake had finished his order, and I had hardly settled myself on the deck before the little craft was heading out into the stream. The soft thud of bare feet beside me told me that Henry did not propose to abide by that final injunction.

"Easy, mister!" he whispered, as I took a step forward in the darkness. "If yo' go inside he'll get sight o' me. Stand by, can't yo'? Jake always ditches me when he goes out there. Lets a man break his back wit' deck-hand work an' t'rows him off w'en there's somethin' to see!" His voice was full of subdued bitterness.

Jake was evidently concerning himself only with the movements of the launch, for he left us alone, uninterrupted, and I was content to stand on deck watching the harbor lights veer and flash by as we plowed out into the stream. While we went on, my small informant told me his griefs, accompanying his narrative with profanity whose remarkable breadth showed close acquaintance with railroad switchmen, sailors, and longshoremen at the very least. For two days now, ever since she had come to anchor out here, he had been trying to get aboard the *Bowhead*, but had failed every time. He meant, he informed me, to stow away; and ingenuously he begged me to help him. I managed to stave him off with noncommittal answers—for I sympathized with him, and had not the heart to flatly refuse him.

"Say, wot's she goin' for, and where's she bound?" he demanded, and when I told him truly that I hadn't the remotest idea he went on at once: "Seal poachin' or treasure huntin', one o' the two. There's some kind o' rough stuff in the wind—and that ain't all. Listen here, mister, take it from me, there's trouble comin'. I seen two parties down to the wharf to-night, and I heard one of them a-sayin'——"

But what he had overheard I did not learn, for in his excitement he had raised his voice, and a stream of light came out from the cockpit.

"You Henry!" It was Jake. "Come inside here!"

As Henry obeyed I heard a cuff, followed by a whimper; but the troubles of my small companion were not of any moment with me now, for the dark loom of a vessel showed dead ahead of us, and in a minute the launch was lying alongside, and I was feeling the smooth, hard ironwood sheathing against my hand as I groped for the ropes.

"*Bowhead* ahoy!" Jake thrust his head from the cockpit and gave the hail softly, but before he had fairly delivered it I saw a head and shoulders outlined against the starry sky right over us, and then I touched a manrope.

I reached the rail with considerable effort and confronted a burly, thick-set man whose face was indistinguishable in the dimness. In answer to his gruff demand for my business I told him my name and my job and started to produce the card which Lopez had given me.

"Show that to the skipper," he said tersely, and led the way aft. Excepting for the riding lamps, there was no light here on the main deck. We passed through a dark gangway into a large mess room at whose after end the door opened into the captain's cabin. My conductor knocked and called out: "Your third mate, captain." A voice replied from within; the thickset man bade me enter, and he departed as I opened the door.

It was a large cabin, and the oil lamp, swinging against the movement of the vessel in the harbor swells, revealed my skipper at the after end. About him the room was strewn with sea boots, heavy Mackinaw clothing, unrolled charts, and crude, outlandish garments, fur-lined, fashioned from some sort of skins. Above his head hung a large rack of rifles, their barrels glinting in the lamplight. A litter of big-caliber automatic revolvers and cartridge boxes covered the top of a flat desk beside him.

Among these things, regarding me with a smile of undisguised amazement, my skipper sat. Evidently he had just come aboard; a handsome, open-faced young fellow. His overcoat was thrown carelessly over the back of a chair, and his hat was surrounded by cartridges which had spilled from one of the pasteboard boxes. Our eyes remained fixed on each other for some seconds; then, shrugging his shoulders——

"Well," he said quietly, "I'm getting all sorts. Where do *you* come from?" His intonation was that of one who has been reared among the easy things in life; and there was in it something like a feeling of superiority—not the skipper's sure authority, but something entirely different, which made me flush.

I told him stiffly that Lopez sent me, and I handed him the card.

"Sit down." His smile became good-natured. "My fourth officer hailed from the Azores Islands, my second from the Barbary Coast, and my first mate's an old New Bedford skipper, but I didn't expect——" He broke off and looked at me inquiringly.

I had not accepted his invitation to sit down, but remained standing before him, and I said that I was from San Francisco, a clerk in a railroad office.

"Too big a man to stick at office work. Do you mind," he smiled again, "telling me how Lopez tried you out?"

I recited briefly the incident, at which he nodded. "You see," he said easily, "I was expecting almost anything, but an everyday-looking man in decent clothes surprised me." With which his manner became sharper and his good-looking face seemed to harden. "In the morning you'll sign, then; and to-night you'll stand watch. Don't allow a soul on board. That's all the orders. Lopez gave you tools?" I nodded. "Well, don't be afraid to use them, and if you need help, sing out." He reached forward and opened a drawer in the desk from which he took a small electric torch. "With this you need not show a light except when you really need it." He waved toward the door. "Mr. Hardy will be waiting on deck for you to relieve him."

I went out by way of the mess room, and I found the blocky man standing on the main deck before the galley. "First," said he, without any preface, "we'll take a turn about the ship and see all's clear before I turn in—that's orders." I followed him in silence. From stem to stern we went over the vessel—all save the captain's cabin—into the great,

dingy forecastle, with its tiers of empty bunks, whose side were disfigured with deeply carved initials gouged by many hapless sailors who had been shanghaied in the old whaling days; into the steerage quarters amidships where a score of harpooners' crews had rested after their rough battles with the whales among the ice floes; into the galley, the engine room, and the staterooms of the officers off the mess room. All were empty. Save for old Hardy, the skipper, and myself, there was no one aboard.

"All right," the first mate told me in the mess room. "Mind when you're on deck don't show that light o' yourn unless you got to. I'll turn in now."

As I took my post on the main deck I remembered how careful he had been to keep his flash light darkened whenever we were in the open, and it came to me that I was embarking on a queer voyage; there was so much caution, so much silence, so little doing in the open. A queer voyage!

Some time, but long ago it seemed, I had been over there among those rows of lights ashore, a city man toiling among other humdrum myriads; and now I was surrounded by mystery, as remote from land as if I had been at sea for a year. That was the way it struck me.

The night was dark, and I could only see the loom of the deck house behind me; the shapes of the masts and yards before me were hardly distinguishable. Over there in the city a glittering electric car was coming downhill toward the water. I wondered who was aboard it, and did they even see our riding lights out here.

The tide was running out, and I heard it swishing and gurgling against the *Bowhead's* ironwood sheathing; the wind stealing inland through the Golden Gate was whispering up in the rigging; the whirling lights beside the harbor entrance fell upon me like cold and distant eyes, then blinked out again. A sea bird called from the black water.

In whose interest was I here, and where was I going? What intrigue demanded all these precautions and watchfulness? To what would it lead? I thought of all those weapons in the skipper's cabin.

Then I felt better, picturing all sorts of wild action. The night crawled by as I stood there with my thoughts in the future, my eyes peering out over the darkened waters, my ears keyed up to catch the slightest sound.

The beating of a launch's engines made me forget my speculations and center all my faculties on the task to which I had been set. I slipped forward silently and looked over the bows, where I could hear the gentle splash of the swells and the sobbing of the anchor chain. I got a glimpse of the little craft as she streaked through the darkness nearly a mile away, and I came back again to my amidships station, but the incident had roused restlessness within me. My imagination began running riot from that time on, and the wind seemed to be laden with whispering voices, while the lapping of the water against the ship's side was often like the sound of oars. Half a dozen times I prowled aft clear to the stern; then forward, until I stood on the forecastle head; then back again amidships; and every time I knew it was some fool's errand that had taken me; but nevertheless a fancied sound would invariably send me forth again.

Once or twice, just previous to the beginning of the affair that followed, I was quite sure that I had caught the noise of muffled oars near by; but on looking out and finding nothing, I attributed this to my overwrought senses. I was becoming well disgusted with myself. I think it was my determination not to be drawn into any more fruitless prowlings that caused my lack of vigilance, for that was what it amounted to. I was standing stock-still gazing forward through the darkness when something made me turn my head; what that really was I do not pretend to know. Probably it was mere luck, although it may have been some footfall which made no tangible impression upon my ears.

As I whirled I got a brief glimpse of something moving on the quarter-deck—just a blur apparently emerging from the direction of the stern and dimly outlined against the sky. Already it had melted into the companionway scuttle.

There was no fighting with imagination this time, for I knew the thing was real. Some one had boarded us, and, whoever it was, he was on his way to the captain's cabin. I started on a run for the spot. Somehow—as things do—the words of the tow-headed boy on the wharf came back to me as I was speeding aft, "I seen two parties down to the wharf to-night, and I heard one o' them sayin'——" Then, in that same inexplicable manner, apropos of nothing, there followed the memory of the furtive, pock-marked face before Lopez's bar.

I slipped my hand into my trousers pocket, and it came out with those brass knuckles which Lopez had given me. I was keeping as close as I could to the rail, and I looked over the ship's side for some sign of a small boat, but I saw nothing. Afterward I realized that the craft must have kept right astern under the overhang.

By this time the prowler would be in the cabin, and I wasted no more seconds searching for his boat, but dived into the scuttle and down the stairs ready to strike at sight of him.

But there was nothing there—no shape before me as I hurled myself into the cabin. I uttered a loud shout, and almost instantly there came the sound of some one stirring; then the skipper's voice, "Who's there?"

"Some one boarded us!" I called, and the words had hardly left my mouth before I heard a yell from the mess room. At this moment a light flashed, revealing the young skipper in his pajamas, a match

in his hand. Save us two, no one was here. I rushed through the door which led forward into the mess room, and the captain came at my heels. Old Hardy was standing, half dressed, glaring about him, and that was all. Just ahead of me a stateroom door was open.

Somewhere near the galley a step sounded, and I sprang out through the darkness. The coaming of the door caught my foot as I was entering the gangway, and I fell, sprawling. I started to rise; a figure showed coming toward me from the direction of the bows. I was crouching now, and the shape was barely two yards away. I rose to my full height just as the fellow threw himself upon me, and I caught sight of his right arm uplifted high. The arm was already descending; there was a faint gleam above me in the darkness; I threw up my left hand, and then I felt a sear like burning iron on my wrist.

The feet of the other officers were beating on the deck now as I grasped the body of my assailant. Even as my arms closed he slipped under them as lithe as a cat, and I was barely able to catch his wrist again. I gave it a sharp twist, and the knife thudded upon the boards. At the same instant he caught me full in the face with his bare fist. As I fell a shot resounded in the gangway, and in the pistol's flash I saw the skipper and Hardy charging to where I lay. I was up before either of them had reached me, and I gained the deck. A loud splash sounded alongside; then the throb of oars came from astern. I groped for my revolver; a voice called; I fired. The flash revealed a boat with one man at the oars and another leaning over the side hauling at some one in the water.

It was all outlined sharply down there—the tossing boat, the bent figure straining at the oars, and the huddled form reaching over the gunwale. I even saw the dripping head emerging from the tide. Then the flame of my revolver died, and everything was black about us. I stood by the rail, with the weapon still leveled; the other two men beside me; all three of us leaning overside, straining our eyes instinctively for another look. Thus for an instant. Then——

As I was in the act of pulling the trigger again, there sounded on the night-hidden waters a cry so loud and terrible that it made my blood stand still, a discordant yell, a mingling of voices calling out in agony of fear. The pistol report followed, and in the glare the boat showed keel upward. Over the rounded bottom a man's hand shot, clawing desperately. Darkness followed, and I heard old Hardy say: "Shall we launch a boat, sir?"

The answer was slow, and when it did come I thought for an instant that there was a fourth man here beside us; this even tone, as hard and cold as ice, did not seem to belong to the young captain:

"If they drown now it's just as well, perhaps. At any rate, it's up to them."

IV.

Silence followed the captain's words; it endured for a mere moment, but in that time it seemed to me that an hour was passing, and I listened for some sound out there on the water. Strangely all my hopes were with those struggling men, one of whom had tried to kill me, from whose knife the blood was even now oozing, warm, along my forearm. All my feelings were rising in rebellion against this youthful skipper. His voice broke that silence, and now some of the hardness had departed; it sounded weary, as if the man had passed through some severe struggle and had emerged worn out.

"Give me a light!" He spoke almost gently.

"Here's mine." I handed it to him, and he seized it eagerly; but when he threw the little pathway of radiance upon the tumbling harbor swells there was no sign of boat nor men.

"She's driftin' with the tide," old Hardy muttered. "Over there, sir." He pointed toward the Golden Gate. But the current was strong, and if the boat were floating it would have gone beyond the range of the torch by this time. While we were searching with our eyes we heard something that sounded like a far-off call. I felt the skipper's hand upon my arm. "No chance of drowning *them!*" he muttered, but I thought there was a relief in his tone which belied the words. "Come with me, Mr. Walters. You stay on deck for a few minutes, Mr. Hardy."

I followed him into the mess room. "How did it happen?" he asked, when we were alone. I told him the details, and he made no comment, merely shrugging his shoulders, but he was frowning, and his face had lost all that easy-natured idleness which I had seen when I had first encountered him.

While I was telling him the story I wrapped a handkerchief around my wrist. The wound amounted to nothing, for the knife had barely grazed me, but at the sight of my blood he shook his head, and it seemed to me as if he had grown several years older. He had been sitting on the edge of the table until I began my surgery, and now his pajama-clad figure straightened abruptly; he got to his feet and started searching the floor.

"Go on," he bade me, "I'm listening," and passed out through the open door into the gangway. He was back in an instant, holding the knife in his hand, nodding at me. I broke off to take a look at the weapon. It was a straight-bladed dagger; the handle was of ivory, carved with thin black traceries into pictures of walruses and long, high-prowed canoes. His eyes met mine, and they were grave as he asked a question.

"Any one hanging about the wharf when you came aboard?" I shook my head. "Well"—his voice was sharper—"any one know you got this berth?"

I remembered the man in Lopez's dance hall, the fellow who had been beaten and kicked when he tried to get the job which I had just been given, and I told him about it. Then, as an afterthought, I repeated the words of the round-faced boy about a couple whom he had overheard talking on the dock. The captain smiled as at a discovery which he had expected.

He stepped toward the stateroom door which I had found ajar when I leaped into the mess room. "Look here!" He called, and I followed him. He was pointing to the bunk. I saw the blankets gashed and torn, and the captain was regarding me curiously as he made the announcement:

"That is your stateroom, you know."

"But how would any one ashore have known that?" I demanded.

"Always has been the third mate's stateroom. They wanted you—to-night." He paused before the last word.

"They wanted me?" I shook my head. "Why?"

"Don't worry about that." He laughed, and the careless manner of the early evening came back to him once more. "They wouldn't have stopped with you. They've spotted more of us, if that's any satisfaction to you." He stood regarding the gashed blankets, and the light was dancing in his eyes. "I'm sorry to say I had three quarters of a notion to go out there to pick them up." He shrugged his shoulders. "I've an idea they got away at that. We're not done with them——" He broke off abruptly, and his voice changed to a harder note. "If you don't like the looks of it, you know, you can leave the ship before we sail to-morrow."

"I'm not anxious to quit," I told him sharply; and with that he bade me relieve Hardy on deck, turning to enter his own cabin with the air of one who is done with the whole matter.

"Well, lad"—the first mate greeted me when I came out on deck—"what d'ye make of it?" I recited the story of what we had found in the stateroom and described the knife to him. "Sealed orders," he growled. "Ain't never seen no good come o' that sort o' thing yet. No, sir. *I* don't like it."

"You don't know——" I began, but he interrupted me.

"I don't know nothin'—only there's a-goin' to be trouble, and I'm dead for sleep along o' standin' watch two nights. Well, keep your eyes open; that's all I got to say. It's all there is to do." He departed for his stateroom, and I could hear him muttering to himself.

So I finished the night watches alone, without relief, and I muddled my brains trying to discover some solution for what had transpired, some solution which would throw light on the future; a useless proceeding, and it wearied me as much as the constant lookout in the darkness. I was glad when the dawn stole over the Alameda County hills and the waters of the bay took on their cheerful daytime aspect.

With sunrise came old Hardy, and the sound of kindling splitting in the galley followed his appearance. Soon afterward my youthful skipper showed himself on deck. He nodded to me as carelessly as if this were a pleasure cruise, and we had a party of friends aboard. It seemed hard to believe—when I looked from that young figure to the sparkling bay, in whose depths the reflections of the dawn still lingered like the tints in a sea shell—that the darkness had covered last night's grim happenings.

Old Hardy called us to breakfast, and we sat down together without any allusion to what had gone before. The first mate amused us two by a story of the whaling days when he had sailed from New Bedford in his own ship, and, listening to his condensed epic wherein there was much of large, wild action, I felt as if the captain and I were boys in the presence of this square-built, grizzled mariner who had sailed tropic seas and penetrated arctic ice, following his calling while we were in school. During the meal I learned my skipper's name for the first time—Captain Ellis. I could not help admire the easy way in which he maintained his position—in spite of his youth—while at the same time he kept on companionable terms with us, his officers. There was about him an air of unassuming, but certain, authority which told me that he and his father and the father of his father before him had been accustomed to commanding.

As we were finishing our meal there came a hail alongside which brought us all to our feet; I heard the beating of a launch's engines. It was the same craft which had taken me out the night before, and as I looked over the rail I saw a red-faced man standing on her deck, at his feet a small, square wooden box. He was a well-built man, roughly dressed, and his flannel shirt was open at the neck, revealing, in gorgeous red and blue, the head, wings, and upcurled tail of a most wonderful dragon. Under his slouch felt hat his ruddy face showed; the eyes alert, the lines of worldly sophistication indelibly graven under them. Such a face as one may find some time on city streets, but showing still the traces of wild sea life.

"Morning, captain." He showed his even white teeth in a wide smile; then, nodding at the box, "Oh, I hung on to it, all right, sir!"

"Good!" I looked around and saw Captain Ellis leaning far over the rail, his eyes intent on the little, square wooden box. He straightened abruptly. "Look alive, Mr. Hardy!"

Hardy was already busy with a line, and in a moment he had the rope down overside. Jake, the launch tender, was standing by with a boat hook on the launch's forward deck, and he remained there while the first mate hauled the box up over the *Bowhead's* rail. When we had it aboard, the

man with the tattooed dragon climbed nimbly up the cleats.

"Never a soul showed his face all night, sir," he said, in a low voice. "They never knew I had it." The skipper smiled as he answered:

"No. They picked us out for their visit, Leary. Tried to knife the third mate; they had a candidate for his berth. Well, we've got it here now. Lend a hand; we'll stow it away."

At his order I carried the case back through the cabin into the lazaret, and Captain Ellis himself locked the door upon it. He nodded when he had done this and smiled as if relieved; and I heard him talking quietly to Leary while both of them glanced occasionally toward the lazaret. "Mr. Hardy will stand watch on board," the skipper said finally. "Along with you! I'm going uptown to sign Walters here. We'll be back in time for you to look after the crew when they come."

Leary grinned. "We'll keep a weather eye for boarders. Sail wit' the afternoon tide then?" The captain nodded.

A few minutes later, when we two were on the main deck, about to climb down to the waiting launch, I saw how quickly this young skipper could change. He had been cheerful, all alight with anticipation, smiling down at the boatman, when we heard a step behind us, and, looking up, caught sight of Leary emerging from the gangway by the galley.

"I wanted to say——" the mate began, but Captain Ellis cut him short with a gesture toward the cabin.

"Get aft there!" The skipper's voice was icy, and his face was colder than his tone. "Back into the cabin, and don't you set foot outside that room until I'm on board! Mind, now!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" Leary answered quietly and vanished.

I climbed over the rail and down the side, lost in a maze of speculation which was chiefly concerned with that box in the lazaret. So this precious little cargo was mixed up in the intrigue in which I had found myself entangled along with those night boarders and that dagger with its hilt of barbaric-carved walrus ivory. Sealed orders and ugly business! I was staring at the *Bowhead's* somber hull from the deck of the launch when Captain Ellis said quietly into my ear:

"Now that you've made up your mind to stick, I don't mind telling you that you've got to keep sharp eyes, and be ready to act." He saw my look of curiosity, for he shrugged his shoulders as he went on: "Oh, it's just a mere matter of trade we're out for."

V.

I took time while I was uptown to write a few lines to the one or two friends who would be concerned over my disappearance, and I telephoned my resignation to the W. R. & N. The launch was ready in the slip when we returned to Meiggs' wharf, and it took us out to the *Bowhead*. A fine, clear morning it was, with a rush of free wind through the Golden Gate which made the bay dance in a thousand little crested swells, tossing the small craft at their moorings, and bringing the flush to my cheeks; such a day as any man would choose for going to sea—an honest morning, full of promise.

From the time when I climbed aboard, the ship was busy; it was the usual hurry that comes before a vessel turns her bow toward the open sea. Our crew began to come within the hour; there were two installments of them, with Red Leary in charge on the launch which brought them out to us. The first crowd was our forecastle hands, as hard looking a lot as any whaler ever took on during the days of crimps and blood money; combings from Tar Flat and the docks. They found their places in the forecastle amid the usual drunken wrangling over bunks, and we three mates had our hands full for a while keeping them in order. However, they subsided finally without any recourse on our part to drastic measures. With them came the fourth mate, who, being like myself a mere boat's officer, bunked along with me; a full-faced man, dark as an Indian, and silent. He seemed to glide rather than walk across the deck as he made his way to our stateroom, where he deposited his bag and sea chest.

An hour later, the steerage crew arrived—the men who bunked amidships, who, if the old *Bowhead* were following her usual line, would wield the harpoon, or, if the ship had been a sealer, would have handled the rifles. A swaggering crowd, but for the most part silent, with the air of men who know their business, and don't propose to be loud-mouthed about it; hard-featured, bold-eyed, with well-knit, muscular figures; alert—their very walk showed that. Among them I recognized two or three faces which I had seen last night in front of the All Nations bar. They found their places in the amidships quarters without any disturbance, and long before we weighed anchor they were yarning lazily, filling the air with the blue reek from their pipes.

In the early afternoon, the fires were going and the steam was up; the anchor cable came in, rasping, through the hawse holes, and the *Bowhead* turned her black nose toward the Golden Gate. We passed the channel buoys, and I saw Captain Ellis on the quarter-deck talking to the helmsman; also I noticed that many of the hands, amidships and forward, were glancing toward him as we steamed out through the Heads. All were awaiting the moment when, having gained the open water, he would give the word at which the helm would be shifted—and the direction of our course deter-

mined—the moment when we would know whether we were bound for tropic waters or for the ice floes. Out we went and on out, past the pilot schooner hovering like some white-winged bird, past the lightship, with her plump red hull and her stubby masts. Then——

A word from the skipper; the helmsman's arms moved; the ship responded slowly; she turned her bluff bows to the north. Across the forecastle head I saw the distant sky lines, pale, elusive, full of mystery, and the *Bowhead* plowed on, churning the water into snowy foam as she made toward that remote horizon beyond which lay Bering and the arctic.

We had gone several miles, when one of the hands, a grizzled, lean, old Dane, came toward me.

"Stowaway, sir," he said tersely, and jerked his head toward the chain locker.

I followed him to the place, and, looking down into the cavern, caught the outlines of a small form, vague gray in the dimness.

"Come out of this!" I ordered.

There was a stirring; the huddled shape straightened, and the face showed in the afternoon sunshine. It was my young acquaintance of the night before—Henry, very much the worse for rust and dirt, with great brown smudges on his cheeks and a general air of dishevelment which made him a sorry spectacle in itself, but was a mere accompaniment to the profound bodily suffering that had overtaken him. He looked up into my face as I dragged him out to the deck, and he tried to smile.

"Told—yo'—I—was—goin'—to—horn—in," he managed to ejaculate, and then gave himself over to the throes of seasickness. I bade the Dane take him back to the steerage, and I went to hunt Leary, whose watch it was.

The second mate came forward with me and surveyed Henry, smiling grimly. "How'd ye come aboard?" he roared. The invalid managed to shift his eyes in the direction of his inquisitor, but otherwise he did not move; nor did he answer.

"Give him to Sang," Leary ordered one of the harpooners. "When he's able to stand on his pins he'll make a good galley boy.

"Started that way meself," he told me, as we were leaving the steerage; "and on a whaler, at that. I bet he sees more trouble than I did, though, on his first v'y'ge."

I asked him what he meant, but he shook his head. "I'll wise yo' this much," he went on. "Them steerage hands is all right. I know every man o' them, and Lopez swears to them, too. Been shipmates wit' some o' them seal hunters meself; but when it comes to the fo'c'stle——" he paused.

"You're afraid?" I asked.

"I'm afraid o' nothin', lad. I was sealin' too long to let any crummy gang of beach combers buffalo me. But I'm tellin' yo'—keep an eye on them foremast hands. If one o' them ever looks crossways at yo', wallop him on the jaw, and don't wait. We don't know them; had to take the best we could get."

This made me think of the fourth mate, and I spoke of Castro. "I don't know that hombre, either," Leary scowled. "And when yo' don't know a man it pays to keep cases on him. Never did like any o' them half-castes, anyhow. He's part Portuguese and part nigger—bad breedin', that, and fond o' knives."

Late that afternoon, when I was on deck again, I stumbled over Henry. He was in a little better way now, and he was able to reach up in an attempt to grasp my trousers leg.

"Well, son," I asked him, "what is it?" My heart went out to him, for, after all, he was only a little boy, and the sea was very big. I dragged him to one side, when he was in the lee of the galley, and then he was able to answer my question.

"Last — night — them — two — men—on—the—wharf——" He stopped, unable to go on.

"I remember," I told him. "What of them?"

"One—says: 'We—got—three—men—aboard—th' —ol'—tub—now.' An'—then—they—whispered—an' —I—couldn't—hear."

I did not wait to witness his sufferings longer, but hurried aft, to report the news to the skipper, for after what had taken place, the thought of three enemies on board was, to put it mildly, disquieting.

Captain Ellis was cleaning the parts of a big-caliber single-action revolver when I came into the cabin. "Sit down, Mr. Walters." He looked up from his task, and nodded to a chair. "What is it?"

I told him about finding Henry, and repeated his brief tidings.

"And now, sir," I went on quietly, "I'd like to ask a question—I can act more intelligently, then." He waved me to go on.

"It's like this: When I got my berth from Lopez, another man tried, as I told you, and on the strength of a card like mine—for all I know it was forged." He nodded, and I continued: "Then there's this information from our galley boy about the two on the wharf, which sounds like a plot against the ship and the ship's company. There was the attempt last night to stab me—at least, the fellow cut my bedding to pieces. Then—— Well, sir, the box that came aboard this morning——" I saw him frown now, but I did not stop. "And we're going under sealed orders." I paused.

"Well?" He regarded me coldly.

"It's not curiosity, but I'm going it blind, and, as I said——"

"That you could act more intelligently," he took me up. "Well, Mr. Walters, regarding that lazaret; understand, I want no one about the place. As to the cruise," he smiled, "it is a trading venture; ordinary commerce; that is all." As I was rising to leave, he picked up the revolver and held it out. "Take my advice and pack this single-action gun;

it's a good one, and you'll find that it's more serviceable in a fight."

I picked up the weapon mechanically, and left him standing under the rack of rifles, whose well-oiled barrels glinted on the walls above him.

"Funny kind of trading venture!" I told myself.

I went out on deck as dissatisfied as I had been when I had started aft. However, my restlessness made me prowl about the ship, and, during my wanderings, I got what served me as the outline for a course of conduct.

I was amidships at the time, and I saw the steerage hands in their quarters, loafing in their bunks, sitting asprawl upon their wooden sea chests, crouching in dusky corners—and one, a huge, red-haired giant, stripped to the waist as he changed shirts, stood in the middle of the place, with the light of the swinging lantern gleaming on his thick, corded muscles. Two soft-voiced Kanakas were chattering together at the feet of the red-haired, half-naked colossus; now and then one of them laughed musically, showing two rows of even, white teeth. Three or four shrill-speaking Cape Verde Islanders, with lean, high-cheek-boned faces, were whittling plug-cut tobacco, stuffing the shavings into pouches of hair-seal skin; and a clear-skinned Irish American was telling several companions the story of a fight. I stood out on the deck, gazing in upon them; and the red-haired giant, who had slipped on his shirt now, started things by a remark about our voyage.

"Sealed orders," he said. "Wot is ut, anyhow? Seal poachin'? Say, d'ye lads over there in the corner mind when Alec MacLean made the big raid?"

"Seal poachin' nawthin'!" one of the Irishmen broke in. "'Tis somethin' else."

"Smuggling!" cried a voice from out a bunk, and there was a loud laugh of derision. The two Kanakas rolled on the planks in an ecstacy of merriment; the Cape Verders shrieked like women, and the voices of the white men boomed like great drums.

"Well, wot's all them rifles for, anyhow, I want to know?" came the voice from the bunk again. "Tell me that. Guns enough aboard to fight a man-o'-war."

Then one of the Cape Verders sprang into the middle of the floor, a lean man, with half-savage negroid face and huge, luminous eyes. "Aw, wot do we care? Wot do ye want weeth cabin business, hey? That don' bother us. We got to handle the harpun, mebbe, I dunno, or mebbe the rifle, hey! I don't care weech. Mebbe we fight sometimes. Mebbe we run away. The skeeper he geev the ordairs an' we do eet. How's that, lads?"

"Right!" several cried at once. "Stand by, and wait for orders."

I turned away. It was good philosophy which had prompted that sentiment; those fellows knew their place and they knew their business, and when the time came they would attend to it—according to commands. Probably they would handle it the better because they had not muddled their heads by trying to solve problems of whose premises they had not the slightest knowledge. I was in the same position, and the realization of the fact made me feel a good deal better.

But when I went off watch that evening I got something more to disturb me, and the worst of it was that it was one of those small things which may mean nothing or may be of considerable import. I went into the stateroom to call Castro, the fourth mate, and I found him dead asleep. I gripped him by the shoulder and shook him.

"Time to turn to!" I called.

He sprang out of the bunk and on his feet, all in one lithe movement, which left him facing me, wild-eyed. I started back, for the manner of his waking was enough to disconcert any one, and I saw his right hand fly upward to his throat; the dusky fingers gripped a bit of cord which hung about his neck, and vanished under his loosened shirt.

"What's the matter with you?" I demanded roughly, and the hand descended slowly. He muttered incoherently, yawned, and came to full wakefulness. "Time to turn to, Mr. Castro," I repeated stiffly; and, without any answer beyond a nod, he sat down on the edge of the bunk to pull on his trousers.

I left the stateroom, but a moment later I returned for my pipe, which was in the pocket of my mackinaw. Castro, still half clad from the waist up, was bending over to pull on his sea boots. At that moment, the ship took a sea badly, and the unexpected lurch almost threw him to the floor. For an instant he was practically standing on his head, and during that instant something slipped from beneath his loosened shirt. I saw the lanyard which he wore about his neck straighten with a weight, and then I saw that weight. It was a straight-bladed dagger, with a hilt of walrus ivory, and on that hilt were the same tracings that I had seen on the weapon which Captain Ellis had picked up the night before in the gangway.

Castro gripped the knife hurriedly, and shoved it back into its hiding place, and I went on out, forgetting my pipe in my excitement.

VI.

I had forgotten all about the office now. It was as if I had never toiled over figure columns, getting my only recreation at the little athletic club in boxing tournaments, or cruising in a schooner-rigged yacht about San Francisco Bay. This was the real thing. It is curious how a man never gets life's real fullness until he scents the threat of a violent end!

I found occasion to mention the matter of the ivory-hilted dagger to Red Leary, who took the

news to Captain Ellis, and after this things went on quietly. Of those three enemies on board, none made a sign to betray himself, and we were watching all hands constantly.

The *Bowhead* left the sight of land, heading northward and to the west; the days became raw and gusty and the nights drew on colder. We went through the dull routine of life on shipboard. Captain Ellis left the most of the navigation in charge of the mates, remaining in the cabin to guard that precious lazaret. The foremast hands got their fill of work, for we stopped burning coal on the second day out, and the *Bowhead* went before a fair breeze under her own canvas.

Then, one day, standing on the quarter-deck, I heard old Hardy tell the skipper that we were bound to reach Bering before the ice went out, and it seemed to me that Captain Ellis did not like the news.

"Got to put into Dutch Harbor, then." He frowned. "Well," he added, after a moment, shrugging his shoulders, "as well fetch up with him now as any time."

As I looked at him, standing there with the damp wind roaring into the canvas above him and the big seas leaping gray all about, he seemed to be placed in a fitting setting; it was his eyes whereon the light danced boldly, and the manner in which he held his head, poised well back without an effort. So I got my first definite announcement that the old *Bowhead* was not the only vessel on this "trading venture." Soon afterward events began to develop which pointed their own way toward the future.

We were up in the North Pacific Ocean, with the Gulf of Alaska to the east and the harsh breath of the ice-ridden waters beyond the Pass coming down upon us. The whole ship's company was taking life like a dull routine, the foremast hands hard at their work under the driving of the first and second mates; the steerage crew lounging about their quarters, and on the deck, like a pack of great, shaggy hunting dogs who bide their time pending the chase in idleness; every one apparently attending to his own business excepting Henry, who had recovered from his seasickness and was making life a lively misery for Sang, the Chinese steward; for he was seldom on hand when he was needed, and when he did stand by for orders, he invariably did something which tried the Oriental's nerves past endurance. The galley was constantly resounding with lamentations and bickerings.

During these times, when he saw fit to forsake his duties, Henry was usually to be found somewhere up forward. That tow head of his was continually bobbing up in some unexpected quarter—out of the forecastle scuttle, in the steerage gangway, or even emerging from one of the long, lean whaleboats, which lay clustered on their cranes. He was on good terms with both crews, but it was curious to see the manner in which he treated them, hailing foremast hands as equals and bestowing upon the seal hunters and harpooners a silent and wide-eyed adoration.

Castro, the fourth mate, seemed to have an uncanny fascination for him. Henry was invariably on deck during those watches when my roommate went about his business. But, although he seemed to dog the swarthy man's footsteps, he was never seen addressing Castro. For some reason known only to himself the boy had chosen to shadow the boat's officer, whose duties, like mine, were in the main confined to keeping amidships, helping the other mates in their orders, and having an eye on the hands.

Castro was the one man among our mess who was companion with no other. He ate in silence, and while the rest smoked and talked—old Hardy telling stories of the *Bowhead's* whaling days—he would sit by and listen, watching the gray-haired narrator with half-shut velvet eyes. Always at such times he made me think of a plump, overgrown cat.

Being on Hardy's watch, he came seldom in contact with Red Leary; but on those occasions when he did I could see that he was doing all in his power to get on good terms with our second officer. He almost cringed in Leary's presence.

I was, as I have said, on Red Leary's watch. This left Hardy, the first mate, and Castro together, during the former's hours of supervision. Now, this particular night on which trouble broke was overcast, with next to no air stirring, and a thick, cold fog. A night when you can't see your way with any degree of certainty four feet ahead, and clammy—drops of icy moisture over everything.

It was the custom of Castro to call Leary and me long enough before the actual change of watch to allow us time to eat a bite and swallow a mug of coffee. Habit is a strong thing; I had grown into the way of waking up just a second or so before the fourth mate entered to summon me. On this night—the hour was midnight—I came to my senses with a start, and felt a chill of apprehension. It was as if some one were holding a weapon at my throat—I don't mean to say that this was the actual impression at all, but I felt about as pleasant as if I had made such a discovery. I lay there, with my eyes wide open, and I did not move, but stared into the darkness of the stateroom—waiting.

Then I heard something stir.

Immediately I leaped out of my bunk. My outstretched hands touched a man. I seized him by the throat. He made no sound, but struggled fiercely. I squeezed in with all the force that my fingers had, and the noise of his hoarse breathing filled the place. We swayed together, and he almost hurled me from him. Then the door swung open—it must have been unlatched all the time—and the light of the mess-room lamp showed me the face of Castro, badly swollen, with both eyes fairly starting from their sockets.

I relaxed my grasp; he stood there, gasping. I felt rather foolish, but, to my astonishment, he said no word of reproach, made no demand for explanations. He merely stood there, regaining his breath; and his face—as expression came back to it—resumed the old look of catlike scrutiny. Only a brief flare of red light—which went as quickly as it had come into his eyes—showed me the malice that he bore.

"Time for change o' watch," he said hoarsely.

"Why in the devil didn't you speak when you came in?" I demanded. "I thought 'twas one of the hands."

He made no answer at all, but went on to rouse Leary, after which he departed for the deck. As the two of us devoured our lunch, I told the second mate what had transpired. I laid it all, of course, to a case of nerves on my part, but I could not understand Castro's behavior—unless he were one of those three enemies on board. When I spoke of that, Leary shook his head. "Don't waste your brains tryin' to figure about such things, but watch for what happens," he advised me.

We finished our lunch, and I followed my usual custom of going forward, as the watch turned to. I had taken my station on the main deck, when I heard Leary calling me from aft. I ran back to his side.

"Where's Hardy?" he demanded.

"Not for'ard," I told him.

"Queer!" he spoke sharply. "Look alive, now! Get down and see if he's below, and say nothing."

I ran below. There was no sign of the first mate, and his bedding was undisturbed. We made a swift search of the deck. It was fruitless.

"Shall I call all hands?" I asked.

"No!" Leary snapped. "That's just what he may expect—whoever it *is*. Stay here. And keep well aft. Don't let any of the hands come near." With that he vanished.

It was a good ten minutes before he reappeared. "All quiet, as far as a man can judge. I been in the fo'c'stle and steerage. Go call the skipper."

Captain Ellis heard the facts from me and then from Leary. "Call the man at the wheel in Mr. Hardy's watch," he bade me.

The fellow answered our young skipper's queries readily enough—he was an old-time seaman, a weather-beaten, bent-backed sailor, from the days of the square-riggers. He had been in the cockpit, and had seen nothing nor talked with any one save a word or two with Hardy—until the last half hour on duty. At that time the first mate had gone forward somewhere and left him alone. A minute or two later, Castro had come aft and called his attention to what the fourth mate said was the distant light of a passing vessel. They had looked together, but the helmsman could see nothing.

"Any one moving on deck at the time?" Captain Ellis broke in.

"Didn't see or hear any one, sir; but they might 'a' been. I was lookin' off the starboard quarter, where the fourth mate was pointin'."

"All right, my man; go forward and turn in. Keep your mouth closed." As the hand departed with an "Aye, aye, sir!" the skipper turned to me, and I saw his face in the faint light here on deck, white and drawn, his lips pressed to a thin line. "Call Castro," he bade me.

The fourth mate came from his stateroom, half dressed; and his full, dark face was absolutely impassive as the young skipper questioned him. He had, he said, met Hardy coming forward from the quarter-deck, and they had exchanged a word or two concerning what the latter took to be a vessel astern of us. After that, he himself had gone on aft and had talked with the man at the wheel. Never laid eyes on Hardy since.

"Well"—Captain Ellis held his face close to Castro's—"you were the last man on earth to see him. He's gone!"

"So? Gone?" Castro's voice was inflectionless, his fat face remained stolid. "Get back to your stateroom and turn in," the skipper bade him; and when we three were alone: "Mr. Leary, you're first officer; and Mr. Walters, you take second mate's berth. Now," his eyes were hard in the feeble lamplight, "this is only the beginning. They've started—but we'll finish it. It is up to us three—the safety of——" He paused.

"That box in the lazaret," I thought.

As he departed, his form, usually so well poised, seemed a little bent, and for the moment there was nothing of youth about him; all of that was lost under the serious air which had descended upon him.

"Keep eyes in the back of your head now, lad," Red Leary told me. "I got an idea you had a good hunch when you woke up an' jumped that Portugee nigger. He's one of them three, all right!"

VII.

Nothing more happened until we put into Dutch Harbor. Those intervening days were among the longest that I ever went through, for suspense filled every hour of the twenty-four. Red Leary put it plainly when he said to me: "This sitting tight and waiting for the other fellow to show is what gets a man." It got me; I was as nervous as a cat in a strange garret; the whole ship seemed wrong. The entire ship's company, themselves enduring suspicions and feeling that they in turn might be suspected, were in as bad a way as I. But Castro was unruffled, going about his business like a well-fed cat, invulnerable as yet to accusation, though all eyes were upon him. He was a marvel, that fellow, as I look back on him, the only really calm man among us.

So we sailed onward into the northwest, with

the days growing colder and the chill of mutual suspicion settling down over the whole ship, while we waited to see some sign of the other two traitors. Up forward, the men were looking at one another out of the corner of their eyes, and in the cabin we were maintaining the same demeanor toward that one of us whom none could accuse.

There was a decided feeling of relief on my part when we reached the pass which leads through the islands into Bering Sea and learned that the ice still held. The next morning we were at anchor in Dutch Harbor, along with a dozen other vessels, all of which were biding the hour when the floes would break, leaving lanes of open water between. The sight of these steamships, their decks lined with the usual crowds of Nome and St. Michael bound passengers, was comfortable to me. All around the little haven the mountains towered high, volcanic heights whose rocky sides showed black where they were too steep for the snow to hang upon them.

When we entered the harbor, Captain Ellis and Leary stood side by side on the quarter-deck, and I could see how the two of them were peering all about them, from ship to ship, as if in search of some particular craft. At length they both nodded as Leary said: "Not here yet, sir," and they seemed relieved.

But before an hour had gone by I heard Leary calling the skipper, and I hurried on deck, for there was something in his voice which stirred me. He was pointing, and I followed the direction which his finger indicated. A patch of smoke overhung the water there; and, as that patch came on, I made out the shape of a vessel.

"Stood by outside and watched us comin' in," Leary swore. "I might 'a' known it!"

"As well fetch up with him here as anywhere." Captain Ellis shrugged his shoulders, and went down to his cabin, whistling.

Leary turned to me: "Seems to make him feel better when trouble starts. That's the *William Winthrop,* lad, and she's going to beat us to it by fair means or foul, unless we keep our eyes open."

"Beat us to what?" I asked. He smiled, and shook his head. "Ye'll know soon, now."

She was a black-hulled craft like the *Bowhead,* but it seemed to me clumsier in build. There were several figures on her quarter-deck, and I heard Red Leary muttering. He turned to me. "In the old days," he said, "she had a traveling wheel; they've changed it now, but ye can still find the black stain running from one side o' the deck to the other." I looked at him inquiringly, laying down my glasses. "From the blood of sailormen." He swore again. "I'll show ye the man that made her a hell ship." She was drawing close now, and I could distinguish the faces of the group on her quarter-deck when next I picked up the glasses.

"Look!" Leary's voice was shaking a little as from passion. "That little one, wit' the sweater and the parka and the two or t'ree coats in under it; the one wit' the skinny face." I nodded, for I could make out the gaunt features and the wrinkled, birdlike neck thrusting out from a bundle of wrappings. "That's him, T'ree-finger Olson." As he spoke, I saw the little man move—he must have been delivering an order—and the *William Winthrop* changed her course, heading nearer toward us. "All right," Leary muttered. "It's us and you for it, you man-killer, and me hopin' you'll never see port again!"

Within a half hour they were at anchor about a quarter of a mile outside of us, and we could see their crew crowding along the rail, gazing across the water in our direction, while our own crews, both amidships and forward, were gazing similarly at the *William Winthrop,* exchanging low-voiced comments. In that strange way in which news percolates through a barracks or a prison or a ship it had gone over the *Bowhead* from stem to stern that the big black craft was, for some reason, our opponent in this venture. A look caught here and a word overheard there always does the business among a crowd of men.

After that there was no more excitement, save for some grumbling up forward over the fact that no hands were to leave the ship. Noon passed, and it was about one o'clock when Captain Ellis came on deck. "I'm going ashore to report Hardy's disappearance," he announced. "I'll take Castro with me." He nodded for me to come nearer. "Mr. Leary has my orders. Keep a sharp eye on the men—and don't forget about that lazaret."

After the skipper and the third mate had departed, quiet settled down again; and I stayed on deck, gazing now at the snow-hooded mountains which inclosed the narrow bay and now at the black hulk lying outside of us. Our own men were lounging up forward, and I had the after part of the ship to myself, for Leary was below.

About two o'clock, a boat put off from the *William Winthrop,* and before the men had pulled a dozen strokes I saw that it was coming in our direction. I hurried to call Leary; he was on deck beside me in a moment. "T'ree Finger himself!" He breathed hard. "What would he be up to, anyhow?" He scowled at the approaching boat again, and swore. Then—— "Am I afraid of one little man?" he muttered.

He was leaning over the rail when the boat came alongside—and he never wasted a word on the shrunken man with the wizened face who was climbing up the side, but ordered the two oarsmen to shove off at once. "Stand by, out there," he said gruffly, "and don't come closer!"

The skipper of the *William Winthrop* scrambled over the rail. His eyes were dull, like the eyes of a dead fish, and the skin hung to the bones of his face as the skin of a mummy clings. There was

something lifeless in the way he held his mouth—with the lower jaw hanging, the chin sunken a little, so that his blue lips were always parted. And he wore many clothes, how many I do not know; but I saw at least two coats under his fur-collared parka, with a high-collared gray sweater under the coats. The day was reasonably warm for the latitude and the time of year—just an ordinary raw afternoon—but his hands were sunk in mittens, which he worn on strings hung over his shoulders.

He gazed at me, blinking the long, parchment-like lids down over his pale eyes and raising them again; it was as if a man long in his tomb were scrutinizing me; there was something absolutely uncanny about him. Leary turned away from the rail and faced him. "Well, Cap'n Olson, wot can I do fer ye?"

Neither of them made a movement toward shaking hands, and Leary's attitude was like that of a bulldog who is licking his chops as he regards a smaller animal.

"Cap'n Ellis?" The little man spoke in a sort of half whisper.

"Gone ashore, as ye well know." Leary stood silent, implacable.

"Come below! I want a word with yo'." Olson started toward the cabin companionway.

Leary hesitated, and for an instant I could see that he was on the point of calling the visitor back; then, muttering an oath, he followed; but he took time first to give me a meaning look, and I nodded. When both heads had vanished under the companion scuttle, I devoted my attention to the boat which lay alongside; but the oarsmen were evidently in no mind to violate Leary's orders, at least, not while I was watching them; and the curiosity which had drawn a number of our hands to the rail when the visitors had first come was already subsiding, for the men were going back to their quarters, to growl about the forbidden shore leave.

The *Bowhead* was very quiet now, and I could hear the sounds of the two voices coming from the cabin. Eventually even this ceased, and I wondered what had happened to make Leary talk with this hated visitor in an undertone. I looked out at the small boat; the men were keeping it in its place; an interval of perhaps fifteen minutes had elapsed since Three-Fingered Olson had disappeared with the first mate. Still I was not feeling at all uneasy—certainly, Leary was able to take care of himself!

Perhaps it was the way the men kept looking at me from the boat, perhaps something more subtle than a sense of foreboding; at any rate, I felt pulled toward the cabin. As I was combating that queer impulse to go below, I heard a scraping sound. It came up the companionway, a faint sound, as if some one were dragging a heavy body over the floor.

I cast one glance toward the boat, and saw that it was still in its designated place. I entered the companionway very softly, stepping down the steep flight with as little noise as possible. At the bottom of the stairs I paused, and was on the point of going back again, for there was Leary right before me in the dusky cabin, seated in the wide-armed chair which Captain Ellis usually occupied, his head back, and across the desk from him Captain Olson was standing, regarding him intently. Then it came to me that there was something wrong in Leary's attitude. His head was too far back—the posture seemed grotesque now. I paused; then stepped forward into the cabin to look closer.

At once I turned, with the idea of rushing forth, and I opened my mouth to cry out, for now that I had come into the room I got a heavy, sweetish odor which was unmistakable—chloroform; the air was full of it. As I parted my lips to shout the alarm, and even as I was lifting my foot from the floor, some one leaped from behind the bulkhead, which shuts off the companionway from the after portion of the cabin; a pair of hands closed upon my throat, and the weight of a man upon my back made me pitch forward.

As I struggled, I heard footsteps coming closer, and then that husky half whisper of Olson's: "Here, over his nose."

The sweet smell became overpowering, blackness followed. But before that darkness closed in upon me, while I was still fighting with hands and feet, I got a glimpse of the lazaret door; it was wide open, and the square, wooden box which we had taken on board from the launch, the little case which Leary had brought to us and which Captain Ellis had guarded so carefully, was on the floor. That was the last thing I really knew.

That unfathomable interval through which one passes when he is under an anæsthetic was succeeded by a terrible struggle of awakening—just as when one fights his way out of a terrible nightmare. It was with me as though I were struggling to bring back into my own body, and finally, after a weary succession of battles, I began to know the things about me—the cabin bulkhead, the swinging oil lamp overhead, the face of Captain Ellis.

It seemed to me—in that first moment of coherent thought—that he looked upon me in sorrow and concern, and for what was like a very long time. I kept wondering at this, for I knew that I had failed in the task which he had set upon me. I heard his voice as from a great distance:

"There, Walters. You're awake now?"

I tried to answer him, but I could say nothing.

Later on, I was able to talk and to listen, and he told me that Leary was lying on the deck in a bad way. "He may pull through. They nearly killed him." And still the skipper's voice conveyed no reproach; and as I looked up into his young face I could only see grave concern there.

"I came—— There was something wrong—and I came to see. Then they got me." That was the first

thing that I told him, and he merely nodded. "All right. Don't worry. We're not done yet."

At last I was sufficiently recovered to narrate the misadventure in detail and to hear his brief story as to how he had come back aboard. "Our men had found out in time," he said quietly, and then smiled. "They were all at the rail signaling us to hurry, as we came in. They'd seen this man Olson trying to drag Leary to the rail, and driven him away. But he found the box; he turned the cabin inside out before he got it."

A little later, he told me how the *William Winthrop* had steamed out to sea at once. I know now that it must have required wonderful repression on his part to remain here beside us two, administering restoratives and seeing that I got air, for, as soon as I was able to move for myself, he sprang up the companionway and on deck; and five minutes afterward I heard the rattle of our anchor chain coming in through the hawse pipes. Long before poor Leary came back to consciousness, we were leaving Dutch Harbor behind us.

"We'll fetch up with Three-fingered Olson again," Captain Ellis told me when I staggered out on deck. "Don't doubt that for a second." His face was drawn, and his chin was thrust forward, but the gleam in his eyes was almost happy in its savageness.

"It's me and you, lad," Leary told me late that night when he was able to raise his head; "and my job mostly, for 'twas my doing. He got me below, and while he was talking the other slipped up on me wit' the chloroform and then I went out for the count. Us two done ut; and us two has got to get that box."

"But who was that other man in the cabin?" I asked.

"That's the idea," he nodded. "It was one of our own men—the same that done old Hardy, the chances are."

"Why did he want to drag you out on deck?" I went on. "Did he intend to throw you overboard?"

His smile was wise as he replied in a low voice: "Not *much!* He wants me as bad as he wants that box—and wants me wit' a whole skin, too."

VIII.

In the drab light of that sub-arctic spring morning I stood on the *Bowhead's* quarter-deck and peered across the broken surface of Bering's ice wastes. Mile after mile northward, to the horizon, the broken masses stretched, uptilted, frozen fast in the positions where the frost had caught the cakes grinding together. It was like looking out upon a stormy sea, save that the sharp crests were all dead-white and motionless. The water showed dark between the ship's bow and the beginning of the field; but thenceforth there was no sign of even the smallest lane.

Down from the masthead, far above me, a cry came, long drawn, lilting weirdly: "Sail ho-o-o-o-o!"

I looked aloft and saw the head and shoulders of a man projecting above the crow's nest; one of our steerage crew. Heretofore they had idled the days away, smoking, arguing over small things, yarning about the old days of wild action, when they had chased the whale; or, poaching seals, had fled from Russian gunboats when capture meant the salt mines of Siberia. But now they went on watch like the foremast hands; and there was no minute, day or night, when one of these keen-eyed sea ruffians was not in the little pen at the masthead. Twice this morning—long before any one on deck could distinguish the first faint smudge of smoke—that cry had come down out of the air: "Sail ho-o-o-o-o!"

Now, as on both previous occasions, Captain Ellis hurried from his cabin with Leary beside him. "Where awa-a-ay?" the mate roared; and answer drifted downward: "About three mi-i-iles off the sta-a-arboard qua-a-arter."

They stood side by side, the cleancut, handsome young skipper and the square-jawed rowdy of the sea. They were both holding binoculars to their eyes, both leaning forward in their anxiety as they scanned the waters. At length Leary shook his head. "Only the old *Ohio,* sir; come to see if the ice shows any sign of breaking." Captain Ellis slowly put down the glasses, and the two of them went below together. A few moments later Leary reappeared.

"Cap'n wants to talk wit' us two," he nodded to me. "Leave Maloney 'tend to things on deck."

I turned over my duties to the big, red-haired seal hunter, whom I had heard leading that steerage discussion of our cruise the first day out—for he fell into Castro's shoes when the half-caste climbed to third mate's berth—and I hastened down to the cabin.

The skipper looked up with a smile when I entered; there was something more of comradeship than usual about him now—and yet that smile itself was serious.

"All right, Walters." It was the first time he had ever dropped the formal "Mister," which always separates the captain from his mates in conversation. "It's coming down to cases now—three of us together. I want to talk things over with you two." He waved me to a chair, and I sat down, while Leary started whittling plug for his pipe.

"I want to look ahead," Captain Ellis went on slowly, and I saw how he was regarding me intently, as if, perhaps, he sought for help from me. "So that we may be ready for the next move when it comes. Now, in the first place, here's the situation:

"We're bound for an island in the Arctic—as I told you before, on a trading venture, a simple matter of commerce. On our success in this voyage depends a much larger project—I may say years of profitable trading. W'ere about to establish a monopoly in a new field. Now——"

He got up from his chair and sat on the edge of his desk, where he was closer to me, so that he could talk in a lower tone.

"This fellow Olson," he resumed, and at the name Leary swore in a tense monotone, then sat back, as if he had relieved himself of a weight—"knows what we're after, but doesn't know where to find it. He also understands that there is one thing on which that monopoly depends. That key to the situation is the contents of the box which we managed to keep safe from him and his crowd up to yesterday. And perhaps"—he smiled frankly into my eyes—"we'd have hung onto it there in Dutch Harbor if I'd been more open with you. At any rate, he's got it now."

"But that ain't all," Leary cut in again. "It ain't no use to him without——"

"No use to him without you, Leary." Captain Ellis nodded, and then turned his eyes on mine again. "You understand? The box is on the *William Winthrop*, and the *William Winthrop* is somewhere ahead of us in the floe, for there were lanes open; they closed as we sailed up to the ice. But Olson can't find this market, and he can't do business without Leary." He paused.

"But," I said, "if he has the box, and learns what's inside of it, won't he know how to use it then—and can't he take his time in hunting the particular place we're sailing for?"

"He might, perhaps—if he had everything which the machine needs in order to work it." Captain Ellis smiled. "But he lacks one little part, which he didn't get in Dutch Harbor." He paused again, and looked at me.

"Then," I said, for he seemed to be awaiting an opinion, "he's got to stand by somewhere for us to show up." I stopped, and shook my head. "There's another thing," I went on slowly. "The three men aboard the *Bowhead*—Castro and two others, whom we don't know, but we're pretty certain they're in the fo'c'stle—at least, I'm coming to that conclusion." I waited for the captain or Leary to take the matter up.

"What do *you* think——" the former began. "What might their idea be now? That's just the thing we two have been figuring over."

I shook my head, and tried to reason on the scant premises which had been furnished me. At length, "They can't stop the expedition, at any rate," I said "Because they need Leary." And then an idea struck me: "Olson got Leary on deck yesterday—he was trying to kidnap him, but hadn't the time, for you were coming out and the crew were roused."

"That's the case," the skipper said. "He had to make a run for it with the box."

"Then," I went on, "he had his confederate on board, who helped down here in the cabin, and there was a chance that Olson might have passed word to him before the man slipped forward; he might have named some place of meeting."

"By the livin' man," Leary exploded, "that sounds likely!"

"Olson could have done that," I went on. "And with three of his own people here on the *Bowhead*, he might have planned whittling the rest of us down—as they started doing when they made away with Hardy."

"No time for that much scheming when Olson was beating it over our rail," Leary objected.

I was nonplused for a few moments, and then it came to me that the murder of the first mate must have been a part of their original plan. I said as much. "And the Dutch Harbor affair was simply Three-finger Olson trying to take a short cut. After that failed in part, he would go on, according to the first scheme, which would mean getting rid of other officers or crippling the ship's company here, so that he could be sure and get hold of Leary when the two vessels fetch up again. Of course," I ended, "that all sounds pretty wild and woolly for these days."

"T'ree-finger Olson's a pretty wild-and-woolly proposition himself," said Leary grimly. "And when you've sailed north o' Bering Straits, you're beyond statutes, as many a sailorman knows to his sorrow. And a man will go strong when there's big money in sight."

Captain Ellis had been silent for some time now, and he raised his head. "It dovetails very nicely—what you've said, Walters. One conspirator aft, here, two probably in the fo'c'stle. Mutiny would be their card."

"It would leave Olson without any evidence against him of being involved in——" I hesitated at the word, but Leary supplied it. "Your murders, ye mean," he said quietly. Then, nodding in my direction: "Me and Walters, here, will have to frame to get that box back when the time comes. I got an idee——"

But what that idea was I did not learn then, for a cry sounded from the crow's nest. We three rushed on deck, to find open water dead ahead.

IX.

There were no more conferences now; there was no time.

All that day—and for many days afterward—it was the same weary, crashing battle against the floe. Full speed ahead; a grinding collision which made the old *Bowhead* shudder from stem to stern, the inevitable stop, with the ice on three sides of

us; then back for a new rush. At times there would be a variation; a lane would open, and we would dash into it until we came to the end, and resumed our battering. Once, as if by magic, the whole field vanished in a night, leaving the sea as clear as in August; but within twenty-four hours, as if they had been sent down from the Arctic on purpose to trap us, the cakes came grinding against one another, roaring, spouting the water up in white jets, and the floe packed solid all around.

Weary work, but that was not the worst of it; the nerve-racking routine, with its accompaniment of back-breaking labor, was having its effect upon the whole ship's company. Frayed nerves were the rule from quarter-deck to forecastle head; and even in our mess room there was a good deal of growling against the elements, especially on the part of the chief engineer, who had his hands full with engine and fire-room crews. The steerage hands were taking it with vast philosophy born of many former experiences; but the frowsy crowd before the mast were ripe for trouble, and a dozen fights broke out among them. This was the time for sea lawyers, and we three, Captain Ellis, Red Leary, and myself, watched that crew like cats. Watching, we saw a change begin to come.

At every idle hour of the day we could see them gathered in little groups talking together in low tones; and when they did any work now there was invariably a sullen air upon them which was unmistakable. The food brought its share of trouble—it is always the food that starts a riot among sailors. They complained about Sang's cooking, and once they sent a delegation to the captain, who ordered them back forward before the spokesman had gotten half through his address. Some one was busy, and was keeping under cover, too. We found no sign of the ringleader, look as we might.

And now the steerage hands got another duty in addition to masthead work. Four of them turned to on every watch, armed with belaying pins; and two of these stood on either side of the main deck, just before the stairs which led to the quarter-deck. They had orders to allow no one excepting the helmsman abaft their stations unless there was some work to call the hands into that portion of the deck. So we sailed on, with the forecastle cut off from the cabin by those reckless men of the steerage—a ship whose after parts were guarded from her crew. Always we kept up the lookout for the *William Winthrop*, but there was no sign of any vessel save the one on which we fared.

One night, the ice pack broke for good, and the old *Bowhead* steamed through open water onward into the north, until we passed through Bering Straits one raw and gusty day; after which we turned our course, rounding the uttermost rim of the continent into the northeast. Days followed, all the same, and nights of weary watchfulness. The mainland slipped by on one side, on the other occasional fields of floating ice; and the ship's engines sighed at their labor, while we three stood vigilant during our watches, awaiting the bursting of the volcano which we knew was seething there up forward, scanning the men in the vain hope that the two conspirators among them might betray themselves. Thus we passed the whaling stations and their surrounding Eskimo villages, and the mouth of the Mackenzie, where the driftwood lies for miles piled high along the shore. We reached the waters which are bordered on the north by ancient and impenetrable ice floes; on the south by lands still unknown to all save wandering tribes of natives and factors of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Then, one dark night, Henry came to me with news that made my hair rise.

Henry had not hunted me up much of late for personal reasons. The fact is, he had shaken off the servitude of the galley long since, and had enjoyed the freedom of the ship unmolested by us officers, who had plenty on our hands without bothering over him. Just now he was getting tattooed by the old Dane who had found him in the chain lockers; and two decidedly indelicate mermaids were rapidly assuming form on his swollen forearms. This kept him close to the forecastle, where he was adding to his already copious vocabulary. Whenever he did honor us with his presence abaft the beam he startled even Red Leary by his newly acquired nautical profanity. I took occasion to reprove him vigorously, which brought a coolness between us. We were on bare speaking terms, and had been under these strained relations for a week. This was the situation when I went on watch that dark night. I had Maloney as my fourth mate. The big, red-haired Irishman was on the main deck, and I was pacing up and down on the quarter-deck, when I heard a challenge from the steerage hand up forward; then a good-natured oath; after which there was a moment's silence, broken only by the engine's long, even respirations. Then a small shape revealed itself in the semidarkness before me.

It was Henry. I greeted him roughly, and asked him curtly what he was doing on deck at this unearthly hour. He caught his breath in a sharp sob as he began:

"C'n yo' talk Portugee?"

I asked him why on earth he wanted to know that; he pulled me down by the sleeve. "Yo'll wake the ship up," he whispered, and repeated his question.

"No," I said quietly, "I can't talk Portuguese. Now, why?" I was not so short with him, for by this time I could see that he was badly disturbed. He choked breathlessly, and seemed to summon all his resolution to go on. "There's somethin' doing, and"—his voice was almost wailing—"we gotta look alive. There ain't no time——"

"What is it?" I demanded sharply.

"Up for'ard. T'ree o' them. They're there now—

in the lee o' the fo'c'stle scuttle. Castro and two Portugee hands. I seen that mate wit' them before, and always on the quiet. And to-night, the way they talked, it sounded just like that night when I heard them two men on the wharf."

"Henry," I whispered, "you just stand by. Right here. I'll get Mr. Leary."

I left him alone on the quarter-deck. I made my way on tiptoe down to the mess room, and knocked at Leary's door. He was awake at once, and facing me; I repeated what Henry had told me in as few words as possible.

"An hour to change o' watch," he muttered, glancing at the chronometer; then he flung open the door of Castro's stateroom. "Kid's right!" He nodded to me. "Castro's in the bunch. I'm off! Stand by on the quarter-deck, and don't stir unless I call you."

He went forward on tiptoe, and I slipped up to my station in the same silence. I found Henry where I had left him, and, as I laid my hand on his shoulder, I felt him shivering.

"Say," he told me through chattering teeth, "this adventure business ain't wot it's cracked up to be."

I wanted to ask him many questions, to learn what lay behind this discovery of his, to find the extent of the plot—for I knew that he must have seen other things to rouse his suspicions. But I did not dare, lest I should fail to hear some summons from up forward. Red Leary was taking long chances there alongside the forecastle scuttle, and I wanted to be ready, should he need help.

So we waited, the two of us, straining our ears and our eyes, seeing nothing but the faint outline of the masts and rigging, the shadowy bulk of the sails, the gleam of the ship's lights, the vague shapes of the steerage men on guard, and the phosphorescent serpents on the crests of the little seas. We heard the long, even breathing of the engines sighing at their endless task of driving the ship forward; the gurgle of water along her sides; and that was all. Save once the helmsman coughed and spat noisily, and once a steerage hand on sentry duty amidships spoke to his fellow in the low tones which men use in the long night watches.

It was the hour before the dawn, an hour when one's blood chills easily, and when danger looms large even to the coolest hand. And the time dragged! I tell you, the minutes were like whole days!

At last I heard a movement; and, as I strained my eyes, peering through the darkness, I saw a blur of forms against the faint gleam from out the forecastle, a blur that changed, then vanished.

"They've gone below," Henry whispered, and I nodded.

Then Castro's bulk showed plain, entering the gangway leading to the mess room. I suppose a matter of sixty seconds went by before Red Leary was back beside us, although it seemed like sixty minutes.

"Come, now!" his voice was tense. "Look sharp, kid, and tell this to the skipper in about ten words. No time for us to lose."

X.

Captain Ellis opened the cabin door at Leary's knock, and the three of us stood before him under the swinging oil lamp. He was smiling as he looked from one of us to the other, and the light was in his eyes—it was that way with him when action showed promise of beginning; he seemed to grow cheerful and his voice became softer.

"You, lad," Leary nodded to Henry. "Mind wot I told you. Give it quick—and in a whisper."

Henry obeyed him literally, and I had to bend my head to catch his words. When he had done, Leary took it up, without the loss of an instant:

"I slipped for'ard. And it's like this: Castro and two seamen—them two Portuguese, the only ones in the fo'c'stle. Castro sayin' that they gotta get busy to-night. Then they rowed a bit—seems like them two was claimin' Castro was to have croaked Walters the night they done fer Mr. Hardy." I started as I realized that I had awakened in good time on the night of Hardy's disappearance. "Got Hardy wit' a knife," Leary went on quietly, "and t'rew him over the rail—one o' the Portuguese done it, while Castro was stallin' off the helmsman. Now— it's this way fer to-night: Eight or ten foremast hands is in the frame-up, and ready to jump the minute these t'ree start; most o' the others is sore—boilin' up, and will mutiny after things gets really to movin'—that's the way they figger it.

"After change o' watch, Castro and them two Portuguese is to stand by, ready fer the word. An' here's the curious thing"—he lowered his voice —"the *Winthrop* is clost by, and they know it. Must have had word from Olson at the start that he'd be here, just like Walters thought. For the signal that sets hell a-poppin' is when the man in the crow's nest sights her and sings out, 'Sail ho!'

"That brings you, sir," nodding to Captain Ellis, "out on deck. Same time Castro slips down into the mess room and knifes Walters while he is asleep in his bunk. Then he comes out on the quarter-deck. And while all hands is takin' a look, like men always do, to see what sail it might be on the horizon, w'y, Castro gets you, sir, in the back. Other two standin' by wit' the mutineers ready to rush the steerage men. Idee bein' they're to get me down and tie me up and kick in the cabin fer the rifles. Then they aim to get away wit' the steerage hands."

"Yes," Captain Ellis broke in, and pointed to his chronometer on the wall. It lacked a few minutes of the change of watch. "Mr. Walters, go call Castro. Mr. Leary, get into your stateroom, to be called as usual." And then to me again: "You turn

in as if nothing had happened. Wait for the call from aloft, and when it comes stand by in your stateroom." He nodded to Henry. "You stay here," he ordered.

So, according to the regular custom, the change of watch was called, without any sign of knowledge on our part that tragedy was impending. When I thrust my head into Castro's stateroom I found him apparently deeply asleep. He got up, rubbing his eyes, and never even looked at me, but sat down at the mess-room table and started eating as heartily as if he had a pleasant day's work ahead of him.

As for me, I turned in, while Red Leary took the watch on deck. I lay in my bunk very wide awake and very tense. I saw the dawn break and the reflection of the sun's first rays come in through my deadlight. I was thinking of the diabolical skill of this plot whereby Three-finger Olson accomplished the elimination of us three by means of mutiny—keeping his own hands clean.

"Sail ho-o-o-o-o!" The cry came lilting from the masthead.

I sprang to my feet. My breath was coming so fast and my chest was so tight that every respiration pained me. I stood beside the stateroom door, and that big revolver which the skipper had given me was in my right hand. I heard Captain Ellis going up on deck, just as the conspirators had planned.

A moment passed. A footfall sounded in the mess room—swift, stealthy. It came on nearer to my door. I stiffened, and—my course of action came to me. I could not kill a man in cold blood. I could not wait for his attack—with the object of slaughtering him. I determined to hold him up at the point of that revolver—to take his weapon from him, and have him a prisoner.

He was within four or five feet of the door now. I threw it open.

I saw his round, brown face change as he got the first glimpse of me; the big velvet eyes widened. Then quickly the face resumed its normal lack of expression.

"Hands up!" I told him quietly.

He made no sound, but raised both arms, standing before me under the swinging mess-room lamp, whose flame shone sickly in the early morning light; he was expressionless even to his hard, black eyes. In that moment, when he saw how the long weeks of careful plotting had gone wrong, how all the wealth for which he had risked his worthless neck was snatched away from him, that half-caste, mongrel bred as he was, showed the cooler man of us. For he was as emotionless as a lump of ice, the point of that revolver—to take his weapon and my own breath was hurting me; my heart was pounding against my ribs; my finger was twitching with a great desire to pull the trigger.

Then chance showed him a little shred of opportunity, and he showed that, though he might kill from behind, he was not afraid to risk that life of his.

The ship was rolling lazily to a long swell, and in this moment, while we were facing each other, I holding the pistol leveled, he holding his hands above his head, my stateroom door swung right against me. For one little instant that inch and a half of wood was between us. Then I shoved it aside with my left hand and——

He was on top of me. On top of me, with his right hand above his head and the fingers of his left hand gripping my right wrist like a steel vise. The knife gleamed, streaking downward toward my gullet. I threw up my free hand and caught it; and, locked thus, we struggled out into the mess room.

We reeled against the table, and the lurching of the ship threw us back; we crashed into the stateroom bulkhead. The knife was coming closer to my throat; I felt the cold point touching the skin, and then the touch grew as hot as burning metal. I threw back my head, and, centering all my energies to the movement, I jerked my right hand sharply from his grip. He was not ready for that; it caught him completely by surprise. My pistol hand swung free, and my thumb found the hammer. The crash of the explosion deafened me, the smoke blinded my eyes.

Then I found myself alone, and, looking downward, I saw, still quivering upon the mess-room floor, the lifeless body of my would-be murderer. The morning brightness filtered down upon it through the skylight; above it, the lamp swung slowly, a sick, pale-yellow flame; and the smell of powder smoke was heavy on the air. The body had already become still; an ugly thing, whose presence polluted the room, the furniture, the very air. And I had brought this change. I turned away and rushed up to the quarter-deck, filling my lungs from the cold, sweet sea wind as I came. The lookout called again—and I realized how short a time had included this large part of my life.

"Sail ho-o-o-o-o!" The voice aloft lilted along on the vowel, as is the custom of the whalers when they sight game. I doubt if any one up forward had heard that pistol shot—for all of them were intent on the various things which they had in mind. The four steerage hands were gazing aloft, watching the extended arms of the two lookouts; listening for the next cry, which came now:

"Four—miles—off—the—port—bow!"

And then the eyes of those four sentinels went in the direction indicated, and I saw on deck, up forward, another group. There were eight or ten of them—members of the forecastle crew. Their eyes were fixed on the quarter-deck, where Leary was standing very quiet; where Captain Ellis was standing rigid, immobile, a little farther aft, gazing toward the unseen vessel which the lookout had announced, as if that vessel were the only thing of importance to him in all the world.

And there were two others—actors in this climax of treachery. The two Portuguese conspirators were standing near the quartet of steerage hands. They were—to use a figurative expression—on their toes. Ready to make a jump for it. You could see that. Ready to spring—but their eyes were searching the quarter-deck for Castro. Then they saw me—and those eyes opened as widely as Castro's had a moment ago.

"Mr. Leary"—the skipper's voice came sharply—"you and Mr. Walters go get those two ringleaders." He never looked at either of us. He never glanced toward us, but kept searching the waters for that smudge of smoke which the masthead hand had proclaimed.

"Lee stairs for you. I'll take the weather; and quick about it!" Leary said quietly, as I ran past him. Then he made a leap down the flight which he had chosen.

I sped to the other side and cleared the steps at a single jump. I had thrust my revolver back into its holster. And now, as I was making for that Portuguese—who had not stirred from his tracks yet—I groped in my pocket for my brass knuckles. I had them on my fingers before I struck the deck.

The fellow hesitated; turned to flee; then whirled to face me. As I closed in on him, I saw his lithe, bare, brown arm move as smoothly as a twisting snake; and his hand flew to the waist of his dungarees. The arm leaped up again, and now the hand clasped a long, heavy-bladed knife. But I was ready for that move.

On the instant I was striking with every ounce of weight within me behind the blow, making dead sure of that slender chin of his. His knife was flashing above his shoulder as the brass knuckles crashed against his jaw. I got a touch of that keen blade—enough to slit my shirt and barely graze the skin—before his feet left the deck planking. His body thudded down, and I stood over him.

My eyes went to that group of sailors up forward. Irresolution had already become rank cowardice among them; their plan had failed; they had no leader. They were slouching back toward the forecastle.

"Get down below, there, you——" I shouted, and the whole foremast crew obeyed like sheep. I glanced across the deck and saw Leary standing over his man in very much the same attitude that I was holding. A fine pair of bucko mates we made!

"Here, you!" he called to the steerage hands. "Gets a bit o' line and tie these two up!"

He turned to me and grinned. "Come on!" He started for the quarter-deck and I followed him. The Portuguese were as limp as dead men, the Cape Verders already busy binding them.

"Now, sir," Leary called, but the skipper was staring straight forward. His gaze came slowly around to us two, his brows bent and his eyes flashing.

"Look!" he said sharply.

As Leary gazed, following that order, I peered out across the sea—and I was able to make out—very small and very remote—the cloud of smoke.

"The *Winthrop!*" Leary growled. "Well, we're ready; we're in time for that murderer."

"In time." Captain Ellis nodded, and flashed a smile at me. "I heard that forty-five of yours." He turned his eyes seaward again. "Look, she's heading for us now!" He stood silent, his eyes bright, a flush upon his cheeks. Then, "Castro?" he asked.

"Dead!" I told him, and I think he saw me biting my lip, for he came over to my side. "Good work!" He put his hand on my shoulder. "We were in luck to get you, Walters." His voice rang as he pointed toward the trail of smoke. "Don't you see how he's overleaped himself, that fellow there? We've got him now."

XI.

The *William Winthrop* was emerging out of the haze where the water and sky converged, coming nearer. In a few minutes they would be able to make out the figures on our deck with glasses.

"Keep all hands below," Captain Ellis turned to the first mate. "Steerage, too; get those fellows out of the crow's nest quick!"

Leary leaped forward, bawling out his orders, and in a moment the decks were clear; he placed two of the old seal hunters in the forecastle companionway with belaying pins. "Knock the first man over the head that touches foot on the stairs!" he bade them.

We waited on a deck which was empty of men save for ourselves, the helmsman, and Maloney. I watched the approaching vessel, and gradually I made out the line of men along her rail. It was evident that they had expected something; they were all gazing toward us.

Now I was able to distinguish the form of Three-finger Olson on the quarter-deck, with two mates beside him, big men both, and clad in fur-trimmed parkas, after the fashion of whalers' officers. The *Winthrop* changed her course until she ranged alongside less than a quarter of a mile distant.

"Walters, get two or three steerage hands, and bring that fellow's body on deck. When I give you word, send it over the rail," Captain Ellis bade me.

Two of the Cape Verders scrambled out of their quarters and followed me into the mess room. When their eyes lit on the big body, all asprawl on the floor, they grinned, and one of them said something to the other in their own shrill tongue.

"Lend a hand, and get him on deck," I told them; and while we were shuffling with our burden

through the gangway, I heard them chuckling as if the whole affair were a good joke. Evidently they had their own appreciation of theatrical effect, for they stood by the corpse when we had it alongside the rail, and glanced continually toward the young skipper on the after deck. I saw the *William Winthrop* drifting closer, and when she was some two hundred yards away I heard the skipper's voice: "Now, Mr. Walters!"

"Up!" I bade them. "Lively, now! Up with him!" We got him on the rail. I looked across the intervening water; Three-finger Olson was leaning far over the *William Winthrop's* rail; his eyes were going from the bulky body to those two men standing back near the wheel, the red-faced, square-jawed mate and the trim young captain.

"Heave!" I shouted.

The big bulk left our hands and struck the jade-green water with a sullen splash; there was a cloud of foam, which disintegrated into many little bubbles, and I got one final glimpse of Castro, a vague, shadowy blur plunging downward before a trail of those same little bubbles. Then Leary passed me on a run, and I heard a stir in the steerage.

A moment later, the first mate appeared on the main deck, surrounded by a silent group of steerage hands; and I saw the long line of faces along the *William Winthrop's* rail intent on that new scene. A hoarse order from Leary, and two burly seal hunters sprang to the davits wherein a whaleboat was hanging; the creak of the blocks sounded shrill; the slender craft descended to the level of our rail. "All right, now! Look alive wit' them two!" Leary sprang forward. There was a shuffle of feet upon our main deck; surrounded by sealers and dark-skinned harpooners, the two prisoners came toward the rail, bound hand and foot. They stood there for a moment, while Leary bent, and I caught the gleam of his knife blade severing their lashings. He straightened, and, as the knife went back into its sheath, his hand plucked forth his big-caliber revolver. "Over wit' yo'!" His voice was laden with menace; he held the leveled pistol at their backs while the pair clambered over the rail into the boat. "Look out!" he shouted; "unless ye want to capsize. Now! Lower away, there!" The boat went on down; the dazed pair between the thwarts sprang to release the tackle, lest the swell overturn them; our screw began to thresh the water; the old *Bowhead* went slowly on, and the whaleboat floated away between us and the *William Winthrop.*

"Morning, Captain Olson!" It was the clear voice of Captain Ellis, and there was an exultant note in it. "Here are the rest of your men."

From the decks of the *William Winthrop* there came an answer—a deep-throated growl from many voices. And that was all. We heard one of the burly mates bawling an order, and a line went down to our two castaways; the whaleboat was taken aboard, and then the big, black whaler passed so close to us that we could see the line of scowling faces along her rail. She dropped astern, becoming smaller and smaller, until at last she was a mere blur of smoke on the horizon.

"Now," Captain Ellis laughed, "you'll have to follow us with that box of ours."

XII.

Big Maloney, pacing the main deck, said a word to me that morning when we were plowing on to the eastward. He pointed back over our port quarter to a tiny thread of smoke upon the horizon. "They're stayin' wit' us," he grinned, and spat over the rail. "There'll be a fight yet, don't ye think?"

"Seems to me there's been some fighting already," I told him.

He shook his head. "*That* bit of a mix-up! Call it fightin', if yo' want to. Wot *I mean* is if T'ree-finger Olson really starts once." And he stretched forth his big arms as if in anticipation.

All that day—and for days after—the line of smoke hung over the horizon in our wake. The *William Winthrop* was dogging us. We went on through the Arctic; the continent, with its low shore line and its background of ragged, snow-capped mountains, on one side of us and on the other the sea, jade green in the sunshine and slate gray under cloudy weather. Often the ice cakes drifted by us, dripping water from their sides as they rose to the swells; sometimes to the northward we saw enormous floes, apparently as they had lain there through the years, unbroken, impenetrable. The days grew long and the nights dwindled until there was no darkness, and the tossing sea flashed to the long rays of the low-lying midnight sun. Always that thread of smoke marked the horizon to the westward, following our path.

We passed long beaches where the driftwood lies for miles and miles, ten feet deep in places; great logs and billets from the heart of the wilderness to the southward. We entered waters which few men have seen—a half dozen old-time whaling captains and as many Arctic explorers in their quest for a Northwest Passage. Still we sailed very slowly on eastward, sometimes bearing into the north. The nights began to come again, and still, as sure as I came on deck at the beginning of my watch, I saw the *William Winthrop's* smoke behind us.

During these days and nights the crew remained passive; now that the two ringleaders were gone, the men in the forecastle seemed to have lost all desire for trouble. Henry was again allowed the freedom of the ship; and once more devoted himself to the process of being tattooed. The seal hunters and harpooners sought sheltered spots on the deck where the latter yarned and argued over deeds which they had witnessed in these latitudes.

One would never think we had been facing general mutiny.

Red Leary laughed when I spoke of that. "An' if yo' was to ask one o' them squareheads about it, he could not tell you the reason. But—if another sea lawyer was to turn loose a lot o' hot air, the whole bunch would be ready to raise Cain again this very night. I would trust them guys just as far as I could t'row a bull by the tail—and no fu'them."

That afternoon he brought from the cabin an old chart whose edges were torn from much handling, its back stained dark with the marks of many fingers. In this it was noticeable, for the *Bowhead's* set of charts was brand new, immaculate, and I had never seen a pencil mark upon them, save as our course had been picked out from day to day. Captain Ellis came with him.

We were heading east-northeast, and within three miles of the mainland, whose coast line showed, low-lying, broken by many irregular inlets —no hills behind the beach now, but a peculiar flatness which seemed to lose itself into nothing, as is the case when one looks from the sea across a flat land upon other waters. Leary held a pencil in his thick fingers with which he was pointing out details, and I was able now and then to steal a look at Captain Ellis' face; his eyes were fairly blazing. Occasionally the first mate gave a brief order, and the wheel was shifted, bringing the *Bowhead* closer to that flat shore line, until, rounding a cape which barely showed above the breaking surf, we fetched up in a narrow bay. Here we lay to; and hardly had the ship's motion stopped, when, looking landward, I saw a speck moving toward us upon the heaving waters, a speck which resolved itself into a tangible shape. I was able to make out the form of a man, hidden from the waist down by the deck of his skin bidarka. The swells lifted the frail craft up against the slate-colored sky, then seemed to swallow it for long minutes; at last it ranged alongside, and I looked down into the slanting eyes of an Eskimo.

But the oblique eyes were blue, and the thick mass of hair which fell over the man's forehead was as fair as my own. I had seen a number of the natives when we passed Herschel Island, and, off the mouth of the Mackenzie others had come out in their little skin kayaks; but none of them were within six inches of this man's height. Now I remembered the tall, blond savages of whom Stefansson had spoken on returning from the North. I spoke the explorer's name to Leary as he was passing me toward the rail, but he shook his head. "Wait," said he, "I'll tell you later," and he hailed the voyager in words which seemed to come from down in his stomach. There was an interchange of gutturals; then Leary gave an order, and several of the steerage hands slouched to the rail amidships; the fair-haired barbarian of the Arctic paddled up to where they waited and took the line which they passed to him. A few moments later he was standing on our deck, looking around him with curious eyes while two of the Cape Verders made fast to the bidarka and hauled it on board.

"Bring it aft," Leary commanded, and several of them carried the little craft up to the quarter-deck, staggering under the burden. I saw now that it was laden beneath its flimsy deck; but before I had any opportunity to examine the cargo the skipper ordered me to bring the ship to anchor. "Then tell Maloney to keep an eye on things here, and come below," he said.

Long before I had carried out the first of his orders the two of them had vanished with the blue-eyed Eskimo, and the bidarka's cargo had gone with them. I hastened to follow, for I knew that the story of our whole adventure's purpose lay down there at the foot of the companionway stairs.

Under the rack of shining rifles, Captain Ellis sat before his flat-topped desk, and his eyes went to me as I entered; then returned to a pile of skins upon the table. Skins, I said—they were furs; the wonderful silvery-gray Arctic fox was scattered in careless profusion all over that desk, the fox whose splendid pelt is worth hundreds of dollars.

Leary looked up at me and grinned. He was seated on the floor, cross-legged, fingering two jet-black pelts. I caught my breath, for these were the rarest furs known, the skins of the famous black fox. Behind him stood the Eskimo, looking down upon him with those strange, oblique blue eyes of his. He was a tall man, even as white men go, tall and slender; there was something fine in his straight shoulders and the manner in which he held his head back. His fair hair was as golden as the hair of a Norwegian.

I nodded toward him and repeated the name of the explorer. "Stefansson, nothing!" Leary shook his head. "He never seen Stefansson; nor neither did any of his people. Wait," he went on talking over his shoulder in deep gutturals, halting often, as if groping for some word, then going on again lamely. At intervals the tall, blond barbarian replied; but when the savage talked, the gutturals, which were ugly out of Leary's mouth, became musical from his.

At length the mate nodded and began interpreting: "These, he says, are the skins he promised to bring as samples. There's hundreds more waiting for us—silver fox skins; and fifty of the black fox skins; and besides that these fellows will trade with us, and no one else, every season—if we bring what we have promised. The whole tribe is there, and he says they've been there two weeks, waitin' fer us to come and deliver. As quick as we produce the box we get the pelts and cinch our market for good."

Captain Ellis smiled as he nodded, and I saw the light flicker into his eyes. "Tell him we will bring the box to him."

XIII.

That sunlit night Red Leary found me alone, and I saw that he had the old chart under his arm. He laid it on the deck and knelt beside it, beckoning me to do the same.

"Remember the *Henry Jepson?*" he asked. "And how she was lost in the ice?"

I nodded. "That was three years ago."

"Yes." He pointed to the chart, and I saw the printed legend: "Very old and impenetrable ice fields." "There, just sou'west o' Prince Patrick Island, is where it happened. I was the only man survived. The Eskimo took me off a floating ice cake wit' this here chart and a phonograph record." He paused and smiled at my wonderment. "Stand by," he said, "and ye'll get the straight of the whole mess.

"Luck is a strange thing," he went on gravely. "See here." He pointed to the chart again. "Where we are layin' now is Liverpool Bay, t'ree hundred miles to the south of where the ship was lost. 'Twas here I first laid eyes on them same tow-headed Eskimo that rescued me nearly a year afterward. And that is not all. The record that I had was the voice of their shaman—or medicine man; and he had died since I had last seen them.

"A phonograph and that record are in the box that T'ree-Finger Olson has now. There's the secret of the tradin' situation wit' these here natives."

"But," I broke in, "I don't understand yet."

"I went ahead too fast," he smiled. "The *Henry Jepson,* ye find, was sailin' on an explorin' expedition, and on board was a scientific shark—Professor Edwards—who had visited most every part of the world and had canned the voices of all nations, including savages. He was a nut on that subject, but sensible as me or you on any other.

"Well, here in Liverpool Bay, when we fetched up wit' these tow-headed Eskimo before ever Stefansson found *his,* he got busy wit' his phonograph—and I helped him as an interpreter. We finally managed to persuade the shaman to talk into the machine. Ye see these natives had come here to do a little trading wit' other Eskimo. They belonged 'way to the north and east, no man knows where, and they wore all manner of rich furs—but would not do business, although our skipper tried to get them; they were shy of white men for some reason of their own. But I made good wit' the shaman," he grinned, "by giving him a new miracle —an electric flash light.

"Now—ye see the way the land lies? We sailed away to the north, and these Eskimo they went on their way back to their unknown hunting grounds. Then the ice nipped the *Henry Jepson,* and I was the sole survivor." He frowned as at an ugly memory. "Ye see, this scientific shark and me spent a long time floatin' around on the same chunk of ice, watching it grow smaller every day, knowin' that all hands but us was lost; and then one mornin' the cake split again, and he went down, for his half was not big enough to hold him. And then, soon afterward, a bidarka hove in sight, and I managed to make myself seen." He shook his head.

"That is the way of luck. I was rescued by the same tribe that we had seen far to the southward—just because they happened to be on a hunt for musk oxen on Melville Island. Well, it turned out that their shaman had died; and here I had his voice canned. So naturally I hung onto that record, and I made a bargain wit' the head man—him that is below now.

"My bargain was that I would bring back the shaman's voice fer them, and they would trade me furs, a skin fer every needle—I told them how each little needle meant one talk from the dead medicine man. And they agreed that when I delivered the goods they would come once every year down to the Eskimo lake—here, a half mile inland from Liverpool Bay—and bring more furs which I would trade for. When they took me south from Prince Patrick Island in the one month of open water, I knew I had a big thing—but I knew it must be handled careful. Case of meetin' these Eskimo in a new place every summer and doin' business; then sailin' away and letting them get out before the Hudson Bay Comp'ny or any of the whalers got next. Furthermore, I had to get some good backing.

"I made my way west'ard in a skin canoe, and T'ree-finger Olson picked me up last year off the mouth o' the Mackenzie. To cut a long story short, me and him made an agreement on the way back to the Golden Gate that he would raise the money and we would go halves. But I knew him of old—'way back in the New Bedford days when I was a boy I had heard of him as a mate, and ever since then his reputation had been growin' nastier on the high seas. So I did not trust him wit' any real information; and to this day he don't know where them Eskimo is or what they're like. Until he boarded us in Dutch Harbor he did not know what the thing was that I was going to open the door to the fur trade by. Fact is—it was along of him prying into my bunk one day and tryin' to find out about that secret that us two fell out. I hammered his face until it was like a chunk of raw beef, and the deal was off between us.

"In San Francisco, I went my way lookin' fer a new partner; and t'ru a friend o' mine, a ship's chandler, I heard of Cap'n Ellis. He'd come around the Horn in his private yacht, and wanted to go into the Arctic, big-game hunting; but when I told him about this, he liked the looks of it better than chasin' polar bears and musk oxen, and he chartered the old *Bowhead.* Things seemed all right. I had to go as second mate, because I had no first mate's papers.

"While we were gettin' ready I learned from Lopez that Olson had offered him five hundred dollars to ship a half a dozen men that he would send for our crew; and so I knew trouble was coming. Afterward somebody broke into Cap'n Ellis' room at the hotel, and two strong-arm men tried to get me one night when I was on my way home. They were after that record which had been made for us. Ye can understand how careful we was from that time on."

He paused and looked out to sea. "We'll be seein' the *Winthrop's* smoke off Cape Dalhousie there within two hours."

"I understand now," I told him. "He's got to follow us, and even then he's helpless. It was the needles that Captain Ellis meant when he was telling me about the missing part of the machine."

"And now," Leary grinned, "this tow-headed Eskimo of ours has got them needles, and he's going ashore inside of ten minutes."

He laid his hand on my shoulder. "Me and you are goin' to have a talk wit' the skipper." He looked searchingly into my eyes as he said it; and at the time I wondered why.

XIV.

First we sent the tall, fair-haired chieftain of the Eskimo ashore in his skin canoe; then we three sat down in the cabin among the precious pelts which the barbarian, with the trustfulness of the savage as yet uncontaminated by contact with us civilized people, had left in our custody. Said Leary, nodding in my direction: "I told him the whole thing."

The reserve which lies between a ship's captain and all beneath him had left; an air of comradeship had been growing ever since Dutch Harbor. It was more evident now as my young skipper asked me what I thought of the situation.

"Olson," I said, in answer to his query, "needs several things, and knows it, and he'll try to get them. We need one thing, and the quicker we get it, the better. The box containing the phonograph and record. That's where we stand."

"How can we get it?" Captain Ellis interrupted.

"Well," I told him, "Olson boarded us in Dutch Harbor and got away with it. Why can't we board him when the *Winthrop* shows up and recover our property? There might be a way. I'm dead willing if you two can see any plan."

"What we'd do to him if we found him on board the *Bowhead* and what he'd do to us when he found us on the *Winthrop* is two different matters, lad," Leary said quietly.

I shook my head. "He's gone too far already," I said. "I can't understand how he dared to do as much as he has; and surely he would not——"

"Hold hard," Leary interrupted, and nodded to Ellis, who smiled.

"There's one thing," he said quietly, "Leary hasn't told you. You see how big this proposition is? It means a virgin fur territory when every bit of ground is supposed to be known—when the Hudson Bay Company on one side and the big San Francisco houses on the other are paying top prices for skins up in the Arctic; when every whaler is paying bonuses for information that leads to a dozen pelts or so; and we've got this! It changes the whole situation; puts a new firm into business; gives us a monopoly for years to come. Now——

"Do you think other people are going to let this happen without a fight? Why, the first thing that man Olson did after landing in San Francisco was to get in touch with the Northern Commercial people, and they're behind him. All he has to do is to deliver the goods to them, and the corporation isn't going to stand on morals as to how he put the deal through for them. Remember, they're the people who backed the old MacDougal ring when they grabbed the mines at Cape Nome; and you didn't see any of that ring go to jail after the exposé, did you?

"No." He shook his head. "I don't think Olson would hesitate much if he saw any good in killing a man just now."

"Just the same," I went on, "I helped to lose that box, and I'm willing to take a chance to get it back."

Ellis rose quickly, came over beside me, and laid his hand on my shoulder. "That brings me to what I wanted to tell you, Walters. You shipped as mate, and you turned to like one of us when we got into this jam. You helped us when we needed help the worst way—and now," he smiled, "we're going to take you in with us. It's to be a three-partner firm—if we get through with this."

"But," I cried, "I've no capital, and I've not any information! That isn't fair."

"We'll fix the terms when we get time," Ellis said quietly. "Now we'll get to work. I'm going ashore with two boats' crews from the steerage, and while I'm doing it, Leary will tell you how to get that box off the *Winthrop*." He gripped my hand. "It's a bargain, now." He turned to the companionway. "I'm off." And a moment later I heard his voice on deck summoning the hands.

During the hurly-burly of launching the two whaleboats I sat in the cabin listening to the details of the plan which those two had concocted.

To recite them would be to tell the story twice—and spoil its interest at that; so I will tell it as the things actually took place. But I will anticipate to this extent—the strategy was founded on Red Leary's knowledge of Three-finger Olson's nature.

Our whaleboats went; the landing party hid them in a little cove, then vanished in the tundra. Maloney was pacing the quarter-deck, and another Irishman had his place amidships. Both of them walked well armed, for everything depended on their keeping the men in order from this hour.

The shore gave no sign of any man when the *William Winthrop's* smoke showed round the point.

She was coming at a good speed—Three-finger Olson was clearly afraid that we were trying to give him the slip. In fact, he nearly sailed by before the lookout in his crow's nest caught sight of us, and the old whaler altered her course with a suddenness that was eloquent of her captain's anxiety. She steamed in and lay to; it was plain enough that Olson proposed to take no chances by letting go his anchor, but proposed to bide outside, ready to follow us the moment we should get under way again.

The vessels lay a half a mile or so apart. Occasionally, at a low-spoken order, one or two of our men showed themselves on deck, then vanished again, to be replaced by another group. In this way, as the hours went on, Maloney preserved the appearance of a full ship's company. At last the sun dipped below the horizon for its brief interval of departure from the sky; dusk came on and deepened until the air was thick gray above the drab waters of the bay; the shore line was merged into nothingness.

"All right, now, lad," said Leary, and two of us launched a boat which the *Bowhead* carried amidships. Leary took the oars. "Sit tight an' let me do the talkin' when the time comes," he whispered, and very quietly, with muffled tholepins, he pulled around the *Bowhead* until we were between the two ships. In the gray darkness, we stole on across the slow, long swells; then drifted with the outgoing tide until we were so close to the *William Winthrop* that we could hear voices from her deck.

Very grim and black and huge the old whaler looked from down here. We saw the blur of yellow from her cabin skylight and a patch of radiance from the forecastle lantern. Otherwise she was all dark, one enormous shadow, like the somber wraith of a vessel long since dead; and in keeping with the ghostly aspect of the ship were two voices which drifted down from her through the dark; for one of them was moaning like a lost soul spent from long ages of torment, and the other cursed in a never-ending, dreary monotone.

We drifted on, and I could hear the lapping of the water against the *William Winthrop's* ironwood stem; the flap, flap, flap of her two-bladed propeller keeping her from drifting with the tide.

Now another voice came to our ears in a steady rasp, and I got my first experience in the black brutality of the sea, the inhumanity which was endured from the days when men chained their fellows to the first frail galleys on the other hemisphere; the callous indifference to another's suffering which still persists in waters beyond the reach of law.

For in the moment when I caught sight of that pair, one of whom was moaning and the other cursing endlessly, I distinguished the words which the third was uttering close by on that same deck. In the main rigging right above our heads I saw the two forms, standing with their arms outstretched toward the cloud-hidden sky; standing motionless in their attitudes of rigid supplication; and, peering through the dusk, I made out the chains which held them to the shrouds; held them so that their feet—as I knew then and learned from my own eyes afterward—were dangling just above the deck. That was what I saw.

Through the constant moaning and the never-ending stream of curses, I heard the rasping voice: "Yessir, this beard o' mine'll turn the aidge of a sheath knife, let alone a safety razor. Why——"

It had a profound effect upon me as I sat down there in the yawl right under the ship's side; I wanted to yell out—to leap up into the main chains and to take the speaker by the throat. But a footstep sounded, and he stopped abruptly; so suddenly in fact that I knew here came grim authority. Through the voices of the two sufferers I heard the shuffling feet as the man with the rasping voice and his auditor arose; then a husky half whisper which I knew at once for Three-finger Olson.

"Ah-h-h! Bleedin' yet!" There was something in the relish of that tone, as if he were licking his lips as he spoke. "Ye're too full-blooded, you——" He paused; the groaning and the curses continued steadily, without inflection. The skipper listened for a moment; then: "Chains is bitin' in?" He seemed to be moving as he spoke; he must have been feeling the handcuffs with which they were triced up. Evidently, also, he was careless; perhaps he never dreamed that a tortured rat will use his teeth; for suddenly he screamed horribly. There was a stamp on the deck planking; a flare of light; the spat of an automatic pistol. The groaning continued, but the cursing had ceased.

I saw Leary rising to his feet. "Ahoy, *Winthrop!*" he called softly; and as the skipper's lean body showed bending over the rail. "'Tis me, Red Leary; I'd not shoot if I was you."

"Who's with you there?" the husky voice demanded.

"Ye'll wake up the *Bowhead* if ye bellow like that. Give us a line and stow that noise." Leary's voice was as sure as if he were talking to one of our steerage hands. "Now, stand by, I'm comin' aboard; and if that gun goes off, ye'll never see them skins."

Already he had gripped the main chains, and I had lost no time in following him; I did not fancy being far from his side just then. I saw the pair who had been discussing safety razors staring at us. Olson stood a pace away, the revolver still in his hand. "Wot's this?" he asked huskily. "Any more out there?"

"Call your hands and have them take a look," Leary answered, in the same steady voice. "Ye'll find no one. We want a word wit' ye."

"Get aft!" Olson waved a gesture with the weapon.

"Listen," Leary turned on him, "I've the game in me own hands, or I'd never of come here. Ye can't croak *me*, because you need me. Get that t'ru yer head and we'll do business better. Easy goes. Mind that. Come, lad!"

Before I followed him I saw how one of those forms was hanging very limp, sagging like a half-filled sack from the main rigging, and I heard the drip-drip of blood upon the deck. The other shape showed some life, and the groaning kept on.

The rasping voice resumed, as I turned away: "No, sir; I got a beard like wire nails."

A burly mate in a drill parka with fur collar and a fur-trimmed cap was pacing the quarter-deck; he gave us a sharp look as we passed, and I heard Olson say a few low words to him at which the fellow chuckled; then——

"Get down there!" he told us as we reached the head of the companionway, and we preceded him into the cabin.

A pock-marked Portuguese in a hair-seal parka and mukluks made from the same animal was reading under the swinging oil lamp, and as he laid down the book I saw emblazoned on the cover the author's name, Bertha M. Clay. The man frowned on looking up at us, and it seemed to me that he was more displeased at being interrupted in his florid romance than at sight of us two. Yet he knew me, as I knew him from that evening in the All Nations dance hall where Lopez's bullies had kicked him into insensibility.

"Get on deck!" Olson told him. "Call two of the steerage hands and have them dump that fellow overside." He held up his hand, and I saw with satisfaction that his thumb was badly mangled.

"Say"—his face changed as he addressed Leary—"they tell me it's p'ison sometimes when a man chaws ye. D'ye think——" He shook his head. "Would carbolic acid help?" He made off for the stateroom, and came back, bringing with him an odor of strong disinfectant.

"If"—Leary spoke in the same steady tone that he had used from the beginning—"that had been me, I'd have waited till ye turned me loose; and I'd of killed ye wit' me hands. But"—he shrugged his shoulders and grinned—"mebbe he's done fer ye as it is. Ye can't tell, T'ree Finger. I heard of a New Bedford skipper went mad along of a man's bite and died barkin' like a dog."

Olson whitened and tried to laugh it off; then, suddenly narrowing his eyes: "Never mind me. Wot about yerself? Yer here. Aboard. Well——"

He walked over to a chair and seated himself. He looked smaller than ever huddled up in that wide chair and his scrawny, withered neck thrust forth from its thick wrappings of sweater and coat collars like the neck of a buzzard. Although the cabin stove was roaring red-hot, and the place was stifling, he never removed a single garment, nor unbuttoned one; nor did he seem to get warm during the time that I was in his company, no matter whether he was in the hot atmosphere down here or out in the raw Arctic air. It all seemed the same to him; he was invariably drawn in, huddled like a man who is perpetually shivering in an icy environment of his own.

At length he spoke again: "Why did ye come?" His eyes were narrowed under the long, drooping lids.

"Because," Leary answered slowly, "I thought I could better meself an' Cap'n Ellis."

The bloodless eyelids drooped farther until I could scarcely see the pale blue behind them. "Wot d'ye want with me?"

"Want to make a bargain fer them furs." Leary grinned. "Ye managed to horn in, ye see, T'ree Finger."

The little form shrank up in the chair, and there was a faint flash from behind the long lids, a bare movement of the head. "How about Cap'n Ellis?"

"Has Ellis got that box?" Leary asked. "Well, I told ye I got to better meself and him. He's willin' I should do it."

The lids raised before those pallid eyes, and I saw a gleam of triumph before they lowered again.

"Gimme yer word ye'll do business square," Leary went on. "Ye got the box; that is the main thing in this business." He was watching the shriveled little figure in the big cabin chair, and his face remained inscrutable, save for a sort of grimness which abided there. He was a rough man, a product of streets and forecastles, but he was a great man in his way, this Red Leary. He was at his best now in the presence of his enemy and in the power of this man-killer.

Olson never moved his eyes. Suddenly the shriveled form straightened, and he was on the floor, a revolver in his hand. He leveled it at Leary's breast. "Tell me now—where is them furs?" In his excitement, he spoke in a hoarse croak.

"Go ahead and shoot." Leary spat on the cabin floor. "Ye got to kill two of us. Then where d'ye stand? Comb down these here islands yerself—wit' Captain Ellis at yer heels. And there is one thing more." He put his face close to the muzzle of the revolver. "Ye know what's in that box—a phonograph and one record. Aye! But what's on that record? Ye don't know! Ye've got no needles."

I saw Olson change color at the words; and even then I think he might have tried drastic measures, had Leary been alone—but there were the two of us. I saw his cold eyes come to me and linger—he was puzzled.

"I have figgered careful on this, T'ree Finger; and I know right where we stand," Leary resumed. "I have laid my course from start to finish. I do not even know where them needles are meself at

this minute. I have no information that ye can get by fair means or foul. But——

"When I come to the place, and when I say one little word, then them needles will show up. No one else can get them."

They stood in the same position for a full minute, the one crouching, holding the black-barreled revolver in his withered hand; the other with his head and shoulders back and a smile on his ruddy face. At last Olson lowered his weapon, but there was a peculiar smirk lurking about the corners of his lips.

"Have it your own way," he said. "I'll play fair. Wot now?"

"Ye gotta play fair," Leary said quietly. "Call hands enough to man a boat—or two if ye choose. We'll stand by fer Cap'n Ellis as we pass the *Bowhead*. Then I'll show ye the furs, and we'll share even—both ships. That way we play fair."

Olson stood for a moment longer regarding him furtively, and it seemed to me as if I could almost see him thinking, trying to lay out a safe, sure course of action. To save his soul he could not hide that treacherous half smile; it kept coming to his face. "All right," he said at last, and licked his blue lips.

We came on deck in time to see the two mates cutting down the senseless form of the man who had groaned—he was silent now. The body of the other wretch had disappeared. The withered skipper cast a sharp look at the *Bowhead*, where Maloney was pacing the quarter-deck; he wheezed his orders, enjoining silence on the men, and steerage hands came forth to man two whaleboats. Presently Leary and I were sitting between the thwarts, while two greasy-faced negroes pulled, one on either side of us. Three-finger Olson sat in the stern sheets overlooking us. Between his feet he held the little box which he had taken from us in Dutch Harbor.

The whaleboat rounded the *Winthrop's* stern and came into sight of the *Bowhead*, on whose deck I saw Maloney gazing toward the shore. Olson glanced again toward our fourth mate, and then at Leary.

"Where will we land?" he asked tensely.

Leary pointed toward a little strip of beach between the low-lying rocks. "There's the spot, T'ree Finger; but, mind ye, first pull over to the *Bowhead;* we gotta get Cap'n Ellis."

Olson's revolver had slipped into his bandaged right hand so easily that I had not noticed the gesture, although I had been awaiting his treachery. He scowled at us.

"Pull, men!" He pointed to the beach which Leary had designated, and then he laughed as he faced us again. "Not a word from either one of ye!" He fairly croaked in his excitement. "Ye'll take me to them furs now, Leary, and we'll let Cap'n Ellis go to glory fer all I care!" His eyes went to the oarsmen. "Pull, ye lubbers! Jerk her outa the water!"

XV.

We had gone two hundred yards before Maloney made a pretense of noticing us, and sprang toward the cabin companionway. Immediately the deck of the *Bowhead* became alive with men, and the hoarse bawl of an order came across the waters to us. Luckily there was no time now for using his eyes, or Olson might have wondered where our skipper was, and that would have set him to thinking. But he was peering toward the shore, gasping oaths at his oarsmen, and the whaleboat was fairly leaping through the water. The excitement of the race precluded any chance for reflection on his part, and in the first light of the rising sun his face showed shriveled, avid, like the face of an old vulture.

He was speeding toward those furs; he must have almost given up hope for them at times—back there where Castro's body plunged into the jade-green water on the morning when he got back his two fellow conspirators. And more than once afterward, while he was trailing our smoke, he must have wondered whether he would ever get a chance at the wealth. Only the possession of that box could have kept him going so doggedly in our wake; the knowledge that it held the key to the virgin market must have been his only comfort—along with the hope to perpetrate some treachery like this.

We were in his hands; he had his men around us; the other whaleboat from the *Winthrop* was keeping pace with this one, filled with his ruffians. And when we landed he would have us out of all sight save that of his own crew. With the backing which he had, he could return to the States and clear himself from any charge that might be brought against him. And he knew that we knew that. Easy enough to follow his reasoning now as I looked into his cruel, lean face. When it came to a final crisis ashore there—we would have one choice. In that last event we must do as he ordered. I could see him rubbing his palms together, even as he held the revolver between them; I could see him leaning forward in the stern sheets, peering toward the beach. He had risked a good deal for those furs. They were very near at hand now!

The two whaleboats from the *Winthrop* grounded, and we leaped out upon the sand. The crews crowded round us, scowling; among them the two Portuguese whom Captain Ellis had cast away that morning. Twenty yards away from us rose the bank, sheer, ten feet in height, topped by the inevitable tundra.

And now I felt that peculiar tingling at the finger ends which always comes in a supreme moment. The time had arrived upon which Captain Ellis,

Leary, and I had agreed. But if Leary was experiencing any of my excitement, he failed to show it. His ruddy face was calm as he took a step closer to Three-finger Olson, who bent now to pick up the box from the wet sand. As he stooped, Leary leaped upon him.

I saw the nearest of the two Portuguese reaching up toward the back of his neck, and I remembered that knife of Castro's on its lanyard. I sprang upon the man, and we crashed down on the sand together. I heard a yell from the bank, and I found myself locked in a deadly wrestle. The ex-member of the *Bowhead's* forecastle crew was as slippery as a snake and as quick of movement; it seemed to me that he had a dozen pairs of arms, and that the bright knife was flashing from one hand to another, always just ahead of my own outstretched hand, always darting toward me. I was completely absorbed in my attempt to grasp the weapon whose looped cord dangled before my face, sometimes touching it; and I forgot that there were other elements in this fight. Until—suddenly the lithe body beside mine squirmed and plumped fairly on top of me. The long arm shot upward, and the knife glinted above my eyes in the morning sunlight. It seemed a long time that the weapon hung there, poised, and I tasted the evils of an imagination during that apparent interval of minutes, fancying myself already feeling the blade between my ribs. But it never descended. I saw the dusky face change horribly; the head bowed limply toward me; I heard a shot as my opponent fell inert upon me, soaking me with his blood.

When I scrambled out from under him, groping for my revolver, Three-finger Olson lay huddled in the sand, with Red Leary kneeling upon his thin chest, the box beside them. The two boats' crews stood like men paralyzed, their hands uplifted; all save my Portuguese, who lay asprawl, his blood soaking red into the yellow beach. He was still clasping the knife with which he had menaced my life.

On the summit of the bank, where they had arisen out of the tundra, Captain Ellis and our steerage hands stood. The former holding a smoking pistol, the others with their rifles leveled. And I could see the water, which their rough clothing had accumulated as they had lain there in the marshy ground, dripping from them.

"Back to your boats, all of you!" Ellis called. The men around me started moving at the command; there were none of them who had any heart for the whole business, and, I know now, none of them who realized what it was all about. Just a crew of beach combings from the city front and derelicts from the Barbary Coast, who had been sailing for weeks under brutal mates and a murderous skipper. They slunk back into their boats without a sound.

"Get up!" Leary growled, and kicked the shriveled form on the sand. "Get back wit' them! I meant to kick the head off yer shoulders, but"—he swore fervently—"ye're too small. I cannot. Get up before I think better!"

Three-finger Olson rose slowly, and I saw the blood upon his face where Leary had battered him during their brief encounter. His men were shoving off now; he climbed into the stern sheets of the nearest whaleboat.

"Now, sir!" Leary bent and picked up the box. "We're wit' ye!"

With that he joined our party on the bank. We stood there for some time, watching the boats make for their ship, and when at last the *William Winthrop's* crew were on deck once more we turned our backs on the bay. But as we plunged through the marshy ground going inland, Captain Ellis called sharply for us to hurry.

"I don't like the looks of things," he told Leary. "They're two to our one out there, and that fellow Olson isn't the kind to stop at anything now."

XVI.

The tundra was dotted with the usual niggerheads on which we tried our best to find footings, but slips were frequent, and every minute saw some member of the party wallowing in icy-black mud. In spite of the miserable discomfort, the whole crowd was cheerful; and as the steerage hands panted behind us three officers, one of them raised a shout of laughter, describing to his fellows the way Three-finger Olson looked arising from the sand.

We had not traveled a half mile before the land began sloping away into a shallow ravine on whose sides we found drier footing. The coulee drained into the Esquimaux Lake, as the charts call it; as a matter of fact it is simply an enormous lagoon which is frozen ten months out of the twelve, and during the other two is covered with water fowl from southern latitudes. It was a cloudy morning—not five o'clock yet—and the flat expanse of water extended inland as far as I could see, lined by low, marshy tundra lands, mantled by myriads of circling Franklin gulls. They hovered like a living fog; and through their ranks, over them and under them, sped long wedges of wild geese, ducks, and grebes, embarking on their journey to the warm lands. The weird notes of the sea fowl and the constant whistling of wings filled the air about us. Everything seemed gray and cold and lonely; the ending of the Arctic summer was at hand already.

In the foreground of this bleak landscape, the warm weather camp of the blond Eskimo stood before us, perhaps a hundred little domed-shaped skin tepees; a different affair than the collections of driftwood huts and underground burrows which I had seen to the westward. As we came close I saw

that the difference extended into cleanliness; the usual stench of decaying fish was lacking, and even the band of yelping dogs which came out to greet us was without that mangy, half-starved look which characterizes sled animals in most summer camps.

As if the barking of the dogs had been a signal, the tepees began disgorging natives. They were clad like their darker brethren to the west and southward, excepting for one fact—in their garb there was no sign of woven cloth; everything was skins. Even the drill parka was absolutely lacking, being replaced by a similar garment of some kind of membrane.

All of them were tall as white men and women, and there was not a black head of hair among them. The general impression one got from their faces was more leanness and less greasiness than you will find at Cape York or on Herschel Island.

Out of this good-looking crowd, as they hurried toward us, emerged the leader who had visited us on the *Bowhead*, and as he came forth the others halted. Ellis raised his hand, and the men remained behind while we three went to meet the chief. Thus the four of us stood between the two parties while the arrangements were made upon which a business was established down here in San Francisco, a house whose wares are sought by women the world over. It did not take a half hour, that arrangement, but if any of the dainty ladies who wear our furs had been present, they would perhaps realize some of the reasons for the price their husbands pay for those soft muffs and boas.

First Leary laid down the box and spoke a few words in that deep, gutteral tongue; and when he had finished, the golden-haired headman reached under his parka, producing a tin box, such as you perhaps may see on your phonograph table if you buy your needles in quantity. He laid it beside the wooden case with an air of ceremonious reverence. I saw the men and women in the tribe behind him crowding a little closer, craning their necks, staring at these very ordinary twentieth-century objects. And it came to me then how these people had been sidetracked up here in the Arctic wastes; how like to children they were just now in the presence of a mere mechanism. Their headman turned slowly and faced them; he spoke a few sonorous gutturals. As one, the men and women wheeled toward their skin tents, and only the children were left, half fearful, half curious, staring at us from behind the chieftain's back. One of them, a baby, came crawling on his chubby hands and knees, regardless of a low-toned chorus of remonstrances, until he had passed the headman and was right among us. He seized Ellis by the leg, and then—a slip of a girl, wide-eyed at the enormity of her own errand, rushed up and bore him, shrieking, away. I heard a chuckle from the steerage hands behind us.

Now the tribesmen were returning, every one of them with a bundle which he brought to the chief's side and threw it down there. Each bundle contained one or more skins, and as the huge heap grew we saw among the silver-gray mass an occasional black-fox pelt. At the spectacle of these rich furs a murmur arose from the steerage hands; and one of the Cape Verde Islanders—a grizzled old harpooner who had seen the trade grow big and die away in these latitudes—swore shrilly from pure wonder.

But when the last skin had been cast on the heap and the last contributor had fallen back among his fellows, the eyes of all the tribe went past their own store of wealth, ignoring it, to remain fixed on that little wooden box. It was my first contact with that strange variance of values which makes commerce possible.

There was a moment's silence, during which the blond headman allowed his followers to feast their eyes on the case, and then he spoke. Said Leary, interpreting: "He says there's five hundred pelts here, and now they've delivered the goods, it's our turn."

Ellis nodded. "Tell him we'll take his word for the measure, and get that phonograph to going, Leary. We've got to get back to the ship as soon as possible."

But here a very common and very homely mishap overtook us. When Leary had replied according to Ellis' instructions, he looked down at the box and swore. "Now who would think to pack a screw driver ashore?" he said bitterly. There followed one of those distracting ordeals which all men have undergone who have tried to find a substitute for that common household tool.

To us white men it was a sort of anticlimax, watching the mate as he sweated with his jackknife, listening to his muttered oaths when he broke a blade, and seeing the wrath on his brow as he borrowed first mine; then, when he had ruined that, Captain Ellis'. But to these savages who knew nothing of the sorrow which comes from lost screw drivers, it was all a part of the spectacle; it added to their suspense; they remained absolutely silent, beholding the difficulty with a sort of awe.

"Well, it's done now, and t'ree jackknives sp'iled." Leary rose and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. "Here goes!"

He lifted the cover from the box and brought forth an ordinary fifty-dollar cabinet phonograph, whose parts he adjusted as fast as he was able. Then he took from its wrappings a disk record. He pointed to these things and spoke slowly in his lame Eskimo, addressing the chief. "Tellin' him the way I will work it," he explained to us, and took a needle from the tin box.

He wound the crank and paused again, raising his hand as one who is about to perpetrate a miracle, and some in the foremost ranks shrank back among their fellow tribesmen, while others raised their hands, palms forward, in front of their faces in the

attitudes of those who would fend off any evil. He set the machine to going.

My heart sank within me; I heard Ellis groan; Leary stared at the phonograph; then gave one swift look toward the scowling headman, then a look of complete bewilderment toward us. For here is what came forth from that sound chamber:

"The speech of the blue-eyed Eskimo differs from——"

He shut off the mechanism at this point. "Professor Edwards!" he groaned.

"Wait!" Ellis laughed and stepped forward, and I saw the eyes of the chief go toward him, then the eyes of the whole tribe. It was a moment of tense suspense with all of us, and I was wondering whether all this danger, all this guarding against intrigue, and all this bloodshed had come now to nothing; whether we were going to leave this place, discredited, like a crowd of exposed charlatans. But Ellis went on swiftly.

"Don't you see? He must have talked into the machine himself explaining the record, and when they transcribed it for us they put his speech on that side." Now he lifted the disk from the machine and pointed to the other side, with a smile. It, too, was roughened with tiny corrugations. "Try this, Leary." He laid it on the turntable.

Leary nodded and raised his hand once more. "This time goes," he cried loudly, in English, "or it's all off wit' us! If only we had had the time to try it ourselves down home before we sailed!" With which he started the mechanism once more.

There was a brief preliminary rasping; and then——

I cannot describe the series of deep tones that came forth now, the gutturals which took the place of ordinary consonants; but their effect was profound on those people there before us. In absolute silence they listened; then one cast himself prone upon the earth, and another and many others; even the chief bowed his head. Their reverence was absolute, unmistakable.

When it was done, the chief stepped forward, and his voice was hushed now like that of a man who has witnessed a miracle.

"I got to show him how to work it," Leary told us, and we waited while they spent a good ten minutes starting the thing over and over, until at last the savage nodded.

"Now," Ellis said sharply, when it was all over, "tell them to bring the furs down to the beach; and we'll make a run for it ourselves, men!" He pointed to the coast. "No telling what Olson's up to out there by this time."

We barely waited to see that the Eskimo were complying with Leary's instructions, and we had not gone more than a quarter of a mile, before one of the Irish seal hunters who was in the lead cried:

"Hark, lads! That's a shot!"

A report, faint with distance, reached our ears, and we floundered through the morass, falling prone in the icy mud, scrambling to our feet again, and sometimes sinking to our waists in our frantic haste.

XVII.

A second shot sounded as we were drawing near the bank; and it seemed to me now that the report was too audible for a rifle at this distance. I came in sight of the bay a minute or two later, with Ellis close beside me, and one of the steerage hands ahead. The rest, including Red Leary, who was better built for fighting than for running, were straggling behind.

The skipper had the only glasses in our party, and as he clapped them to his eyes I heard him utter an exclamation of mingled relief and wonder. I saw the *Bowhead* lying placidly at anchor and the *William Winthrop* steaming out to sea. I could barely make out figures on the decks of both vessels; the little manikins on board the *Winthrop* were moving curiously in groups which jerked to and fro spasmodically, while those on the *Bowhead* were standing along the rail like spectators.

The largest cluster of pygmy figures was on the *Winthrop's* main deck, rushing back and forth like a crowd of schoolboys playing pullaway. Out of the middle of this surging bunch of manikins a cloud of smoke arose, and a good minute afterward the sound of the explosion reached my ears. One of the steerage hands, an old Cape Verder, arrived, panting, at the summit of the bank, and I heard him say: "Tha's a bomb gon!" I understood the reason for the loudness of the reports and the long intervals between.

"Here!" Ellis handed me the glasses. "Look in the crow's nest, Walters!" His face was drawn with excitement. I seized the binoculars eagerly. The *Winthrop* was very close now through their lenses, and I recognized the shrunken figure. Aloft, alone, marooned up there, while the fight was surging to and fro on the deck, Three-finger Olson stood.

"It was him they shot at," Ellis told me.

As he spoke the crowd on the main deck surged toward the bows, and I saw a group rushing toward them from the after parts of the ship. Then I handed the glasses to Leary, who had arrived, in sore distress from his running.

He looked for some moments, then summed up the situation: "Fo'c'stle crew in mutiny: they got T'ree Finger mastheaded; tryin' to get him wit' that bomb gun; but the mates and harpooners don't give them a chanst for good shootin'. It's nip and tuck between both crowds."

Meantime the old *Winthrop* was making good headway, and by the time we had gotten our whaleboats from the little cove where the landing party

had hidden them, she was out at sea. She steamed on straight into the north; whether this was at the will of the mutineers or of the officers we did not know then.

Henry gave me the story of the fight when we reached the *Bowhead*.

"Me and Maloney," he said, "was on the quarter-deck when them boats came back to the *Winthrop*, keepin' our eyes open for fear of trouble. You hadn't been outa sight more'n half an hour before Olson went aloft; and he hadn't more'n got into the crow's nest before things started. Foremast hands rushed the cabin, got hold of the ship, and put out to sea. They was shootin' at Olson wit' that bomb gun when the cabin and amidships bunch rushed 'em. Rotten shootin', for there wasn't no one hit so fur as *I* could see."

Which I recognized as being far too circumstantial for Henry and far too technical, but had not the heart to accuse him of plagiarizing from Maloney.

The question now was whether we should follow the unlucky vessel, but Leary shook his head when Ellis and I proposed it. "They're headin' straight into the north," he said, "and the ice is coming soon. We got to rush things to make sure of open water in gettin' out of the Arctic."

So we spent that day loading our furs, and Henry was made happy by being allowed on shore during those hours of work. He showed that he possessed a thrifty streak of which I had never dreamed, for he came on board that night in possession of a fox-skin parka which would have awakened the envy of a duchess. He had bartered for this treasure a jackknife and a rusty old revolver which one of the harpooners had given him.

That was the last of easy trading with those Eskimos, however. We sailed the same night, and they went away to the northward; and the next season when we met them according to our appointment we found that they were beginning to learn more of twentieth-century values. I suppose they got it from the members of western tribes whom they encountered at the lake. But they hung to their agreement with us, and we maintained our monopoly; each year's installment of phonograph needles retains that privilege for us. So we do very well with them, although the supply of the more expensive fox skins is already dwindling.

We established our firm—Ellis, Leary & Walters—when we landed in San Francisco after an eventless homeward voyage. The furs which we brought with us are not all disposed of yet; we have been obliged to put them on the market slowly lest prices drop. But Ellis had the capital which has enabled us to hang to such a course, and we have been in control of the situation ever since we started.

I chose to accompany Leary on the two northern cruises that followed this; and during the first of these we got news of the *William Winthrop*, the news which the whaler *Herman Anderson* brought down to the daily papers two years ago. Her skipper told us what we saw up there in the Bay of Mercy where it opens from McClure Strait, the same bay where the *Investigator* was abandoned back in 1853.

It was evident from the wreckage on the shore—the skipper said—that the ice had nipped a vessel, casting her bones upon the rocks during the brief summer season. It was also evident that a few of the survivors had managed to subsist for months—by what grisly means they could only guess, for there was no sign of rifles in the little hut which the *Herman Anderson's* men discovered, nor were there any traces of anything in which provisions might have been stored.

A dark hut, windowless, made from wreckage; and in the dimness two bodies still preserved by frost; their shrunken features told the story of the slow starvation which had preceded the final freezing. One of them was Olson; the other my pock-marked Portuguese of the All Nations dance hall.

"Well," Red Leary put it brutally, when the skipper of the *Herman Anderson* had finished his tale, "it's dead sure, whatever them two done to the rest, neither one o' them could get the best o' the other. Yes, sir; there must o' been some watchful hours—no wonder ye found them sittin' face to face!"

Of the log or ship's papers there was no trace; nor was there anything to indicate by what means the mutiny had been ended; who were victors, or whether any died. But we were sure there must have been a long-protracted struggle to bring the *Winthrop* to that distant bay.

Already during these few years the northern wilderness is growing narrower; the unmarked places on the Arctic charts are growing fewer. The golden-haired Eskimo with whom we deal manage to find their hidden hunting grounds yet; but it cannot continue for many seasons. By the time Henry casts his first vote he will be able to tell how he ran away to sea and witnessed the last spurt of the northern fur trade.

For Henry also sails northward on our yearly expeditions after silver and black fox skins.

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THE CHANTEY MAN'S SONGS

THE true chantey songs of nearly a century ago, when our old New England clippers flaunted their flags in every sea, are well nigh a thing of the past.

The old clipper days were jolly, when we sailed the seven seas,
And the house flags of our merchant ships were whipped by every breeze.
It was good-by to your mother and the pretty girls on shore,
For we're off around the howling Horn, bound down to Singapore.

Those were days to be remembered, when our good ship sailed away
From the old home left behind us, to Calcutta or Bombay;
When we sold the heathen nations rum and opium in rolls,
And the missionaries went along to save their sinful souls.

Technically, a chantey song consisted of a long solo line followed by a short chorus line, a second solo line which rhymed with the first, and then a long or drawn out chorus line.

The halyards chanties, the kind most often sung, were all arranged in this way, but a longer chorus was often sung when the character of the task permitted, as in weighing anchor. "Outward Bound" was a favorite of this kind.

(The chantey man:)
We're outward bound from New York town;
(All hands:)
Heave, bullies, heave and pawl!
(The chantey man:)
Oh, bring that cable up and down.
(All hands:)
Hurrah, we're outward bound!
Hurrah, we're outward bound!

To the Battery Park we'll bid adieu;
Heave, bullies, heave and pawl!

To Suke and Moll and Sally, too;
Hurrah, we're outward bound!
Hurrah, we're outward bound!

THE WIDE MISSOURI

Oh, Sharlo Brown, I love your daughter;
Awa-a-a-ay, my rolling river;
Oh, Sharlo Brown, I love your daughter;
Ah! ah! We're bound away awa-a-a-ay
'Cross the wide Missouri.

Oh, Nancy Brown, I love you dearly;
Awa-a-a-ay, my rolling river;
My heart is yours, or very nearly;
Ah! ah! We're bound away
'Cross the wide Missouri.

The words are not always the same, even to such tunes as "The Wide Missouri." The chantey man himself often varies the text according to his fancy and imagination.

The words to "Reuben Ranzo" and other narrative songs were less likely to be changed:

Hurrah for Reuben Ranzo!
Ranzo, boys, Ranzo!
Hurrah for Reuben Ranzo!
Ranzo, boys, Ranzo!

Ranzo was no sailor;
Ranzo, boys, Ranzo!
Ranzo was a tailor;
Ranzo, boys, Ranzo!

"The Maid of Amsterdam" is notable as an example of the rare three-line solo chantey, and for its extended chorus:

In Amsterdam there dwelt a maid,
Mark well what I do say:

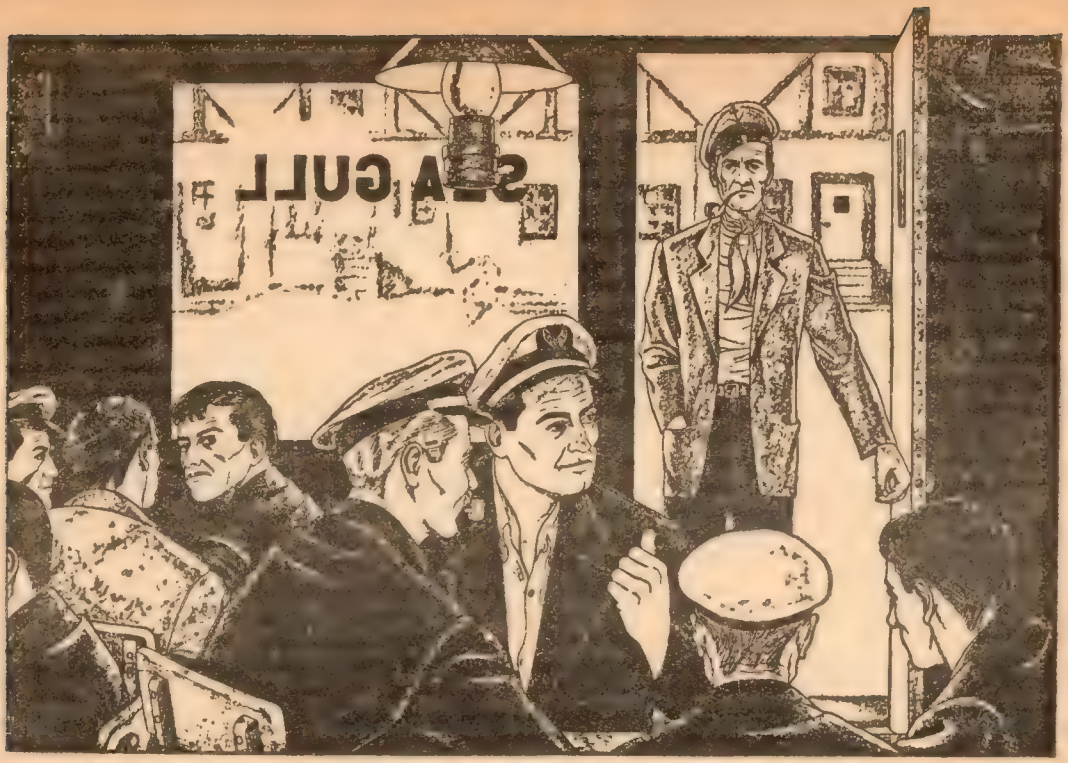
In Amsterdam there dwelt a maid,
And she was mistress of her trade;
And I'll go no more a-roving
With you, fair maid;
A-roving, a-roving,
Since roving's been my r-u-i-n,
I'll go no more a-roving
With you, fair maid.

Her cheeks was red, her eyes was brown,
Her hair, like glow-worms, hanging down;
And I'll go no more a-roving
With you, fair maid;
A-roving, a-roving,
Since roving's been my r-u-i-n,
I'll go no more a-roving
With you, fair maid.

Another capstan chantey, and one of many versions, was "The Rio Grande":

The ship she's a-sailing out over the bar,
Away Rio! Away Rio!

The ship she's a-sailing out over the bar,
We are bound to the Rio Grande.
Oh, away Rio! Oh, away Rio!
Oh, fare ye well; my bonny young girl;
We are bound to the Rio Grande!



END OF THE FLYING CLOUD

BY T. JENKINS HAINS

In the tumult of the storm old Ezra stuck to his post and dreamed of days gone by—days when great square-riggers sailed the seven seas and he had been crack skipper of the Flying Cloud.

"YOU will have to strip off entirely and allow me to examine you," said the naval doctor finally, as Ezra was nervously resting first upon one foot and then the other.

"Hexamine me? Fer what?" the old man asked. "I ain't got nothin', never had nothin', and never'll git nothin'—"

"How old are you?" came the query, snappy and precise.

Ezra was sixty-two on his last birthday, but something warned him that he must not admit it. Some one had told him he could not pass a civil-service examination if more than fifty.

"I reckon I be about forty-nine," he answered evasively.

"You look it. Peel off and let me have a chance to see what's wrong with you!" snapped the doctor.

"There ain't nothin' the matter with me," said Ezra with some heat.

The doctor put his ear to Ezra's side, listening for some moments. Then he felt his pulse. "Ever addicted to the use of stimulants?" he asked.

"Watcher mean—drink?"

"Certainly."

"No, sir, I don't drink nothin' but clear water—

maybe a bit of cider now and then," said the old man.

"Ever have any stomach trouble?" asked the doctor, listening.

"Yaas—sometimes."

"What?" cut in the doctor curtly.

"Well, I been so hungry, sometimes, I could taste the air I breathed, 'n' I had a heap of trouble overcomin' it one winter when work was scarce——"

The doctor tapped his chest, pressed his fingers into the soft part of his stomach.

"Be you meanin' to see if I'm ticklish?" asked Ezra, with a grin.

"If you don't care to behave yourself and be examined, you may go," said the doctor, straightening up.

"Oh, I axes your pardon; I didn't mean nothin'," said Ezra, relapsing into silence.

"Take off your shoes and stockings."

Ezra looked hard at the doctor and then did as told. He was stood up under a rod and his exact height taken.

"Five feet nine inches," said the doctor, making a note. "Now your weight."

Ezra stepped upon the scales. They stopped at one hundred and sixty-three. He stepped down, and the doctor made his notes. Upon the table were several bunches of colored worsted. The doctor picked some up at random and threw them about.

"What color is that piece?" he asked quickly of Ezra.

"Color—what, don't ye know?"

"I didn't ask you if I knew—I asked if you knew."

"Why, it's yaller, of course—anybody kin see that."

"What's that one?"

"'Pears like that it's a leedle bit o' red——"

"And this one?"

"Kinder leanin' toward green." He was not color blind, and the doctor held up a card twenty feet from him, where he stood.

"Tell me the letters in that first line," he said.

Ezra told them off easily, and the doctor seemed satisfied. Then he felt his pulse again.

"Hop across the room on one foot," he ordered.

"What?" asked Ezra, with a strange light beginning to creep into his eyes.

"Hop across the room on one foot."

He deliberately started to put on his shoes and socks, the doctor waiting for him, thinking that he might have tender feet.

Then Ezra stood up and pulled on his clothes.

"Go ahead, hop across the room on your right foot, then back on your left one," ordered the doctor.

"What the hell do you think I am—a toad?" asked Ezra angrily.

"If you don't do as you are told, I shall find you unfitted—I shall not examine you," said the doctor sharply.

"You get paid for examining folk, don't you? You get paid more'n a thousand dollars a year—don't you?"

"Yes, but that is not your business——"

"Waal, I jest wanted to say that down my way I kin hire a feller what's got more sense than you, fer a quarter of that money." He jammed his hat on as he spoke and strode out of the office.

Down at Stringhalt's place the news finally leaked out that Ezra Jones, for thirty years pilot in the Chesapeake Bay and tributaries, had tried to pass the civil-service examination and had failed. Some said he was too old; some, who knew him quite well, attributed his failure to his love of grog. All agreed, however, that Ezra knew how to pilot a ship in the bay. They admitted that "there wasn't no one c'u'd do that trick half so keen." They wondered what the old man would do, now that he had failed to get his license. The government was very particular about granting licenses, but not whether a man who had spent his life at a certain kind of work knew anything about it. In all cases it seemed that a congressman was necessary to bring the matter to a proper footing.

"What is congressmen fer if they ain't jest fer that? What is all them positions fer if it ain't jest fer them clerks what couldn't earn a dollar doin' a man's work? What's them inspectors fer if it ain't to get some graft off'n some one? Does an inspector ever go to sea? When? Tell me jest when. Then what'n hell kin he know about it?" asked Ezra's champions as they sat about Stringhalt's stove and discussed the matter from all points.

Stringhalt pottered about with a worried air, profoundly interested and amazed. It was something that needed thought to fathom. Stringhalt, for once in his life, could not tell them all just why it was so. As a rule, he had an answer to everything; he knew it all. But this time it was a matter that he had to ponder over. Besides, Ezra owed him some small amount for groceries and ship stores. Would he be able to pay it, now that he could no longer bring in ships? He could no longer belong to the pilots' association.

Sam Cornwell, the constable, gave it as his opinion that Ezra's congressman should take the matter up at once. Sam had some small experience with congressmen when he had been a cop in town. A lady had chewed his ear half off in a little bickering and scuffling, and had then sued him for assault. Sam would have gone to prison but for his member's help.

Captain Kidd, a pilot, gave it as his opinion that Ezra was a good enough fellow but lacked tact. What was the use of getting angry at a doctor? There was no use in getting angry at anything. It was error. Think right; live rightly.

"Always think good; the mind controls matter; matter has no volition of itself, and mind is all—therefore, think that the doctor is right, is good——"

"Aw, shut up," said Stringhalt. "Since you got that book on Christian Science you ain't been sober."

Dave Chiselstick, of Bretton's Bay, agreed with Stringhalt. "I've done run a bugeye in these here waters since I was six year old, 'n' there ain't nothin' no inspector kin tell me about this here Chesapeake Bay, none whatsomever—be there, Sam?" He appealed to Sam Cornwell, who championed all who looked victorious, and Sam assented.

From the front of Stringhalt's place they could see the Cape Charles lighthouse, and farther off the tower of Cape Henry loomed across the bay. At night the flash of the Thimble Shoals showed the way to Hampton Roads. Therefore Stringhalt's was a common meeting place for skippers and pilots who loved their kind and wanted to talk after a voyage up or down the Chesapeake. Along the pathway a figure now came walking with a certain crestfallen air. The door opened, and Ezra stepped in. There was a silence that pervaded the room with its little, hot stove. No one spoke for an instant, and all waited for the right moment to begin the subject which needed arguing. Something like a fine diplomacy pervaded the air, heavy with the stench of stale tobacco and cooked saliva, for all hands spat regardlessly at the stove whenever a heated debate began. Stringhalt begged them to observe the ordinary sanitary customs, but these men of the sea and the bay were not to be driven from their usual habits by signs and warnings. Ezra, chewing a huge quid of tobacco, sent a shot at the stove lid and then sat down with averted face.

"Mornin', Ezra," said Stringhalt. "What's the news?"

"Yaas, Ezra, what d'ye know, old man?" asked Sam Cornwell kindly.

"Nothin' no more, I reckon," said Ezra. "I done fergot how to do anything, all of a sudden—they says."

"Who says?" asked the bunch in a simultaneous demand.

Ezra sat silently gazing at the fire, and refused to answer. He was getting ready, for he had to tell, and he might as well tell at once.

"Think no evil of any one; evil is only error, and mind is good——"

"Aw, shut up, you old reformed highwayman. If evil is good and mind is bad, or wise wersa, you'd been in hell long ago. Stow that stuff!" snapped Ezra bad-humoredly.

"Of course, if you allow yourself to think evil——"

"I'll knock the devil into you or out of—one way or the other—if you shoot that stuff at me again," snarled Ezra. "I don't need no mind to know I kin take a battleship up that channel, and there ain't no three men alive what kin do it, with or without a mind. Error, hey? You run a ten-million-dollar ship ashore, and say it ain't so, it don't really exist——" He broke off, too disgusted to go further.

"What I mean is—to keep cool, be calm. What's the use of getting mad at an inspector, or doctor either, for that matter?"

"That's it. Tell us the whole thing; don't git mad about it," said Sam Cornwell.

"I'll bet it isn't half as bad as he makes it out," said Walcott. He was agent for a pretty polished piano, which he sold at enormous profit to agricultural folk, and he always seemed to have money.

"There ain't nothin' to it. I goes up fer the exam like the rules says. I make out my list of time, puttin' in some twenty years on this here bay and rivers, an' then that doctor fellow makes a crack to see if I'm sound. Feels my head, feels by pulse, thumps me all over, listens to my stomach digestin' its natural food—then he says, says he, 'Hop along acrost the room on one foot an' then hop back ag'in on the other one.'"

"What did you say?" asked Stringhalt.

"I says I c'u'd hire Captain Kidd, here, fer less money than they pays him, an' I'm willin' to admit that Kidd has as much sense as he's got—maybe more."

"That's goin' some," said Walcott under his breath.

Captain Kidd got to his feet, indignant. His five feet four shook with agitation, and he shot a stream of tobacco juice at the stove before he started to deliver himself.

"Easy, there," said Stringhalt; "it's only error to believe Ezra meant anything more'n somethin' handsom', when he lets that slip—a doctor is a mighty smart chap—as a rule." Kidd sat down again.

Bullbeggor Bank runs athwart the bay and almost meets the tail of the Whalebank Shoal a few miles to the northward of the Pinfeather Reef. It is here that ships must swerve quickly to the westward in coming into the main ship channel. The channel is narrow at this point and the turn is quite sharp. There is plenty of water for vessels drawing less than thirty-five feet, and as the heaviest battleship seldom goes down more feet than that, the heaviest ships use this cut when bound to Baltimore or the naval academy at Annapolis.

The trouble with the Bullbeggor Banks was that it often shifted with a heavy southeaster, and its end sometimes faked out and lapped the end of the Whalebank Shoal, making it a very difficult piece of navigation to negotiate under ordinary headway. The larger ships usually slowed down and, with reversed engines to check them, would swing

slowly around to get straightened out for the run clear above, where the water deepened and widened for many miles. Ezra knew the Bullbeggor well. He also knew when it shifted, for he watched it daily, and after a severe gale would make a few soundings to assure himself that there was still plenty of room. Now he sat and glared at it as the deep, thundering roar of the breakers shook the wintry air with the ponderous rumble a giant sea always makes when falling upon a shoal.

The weather had been cold and the easterly winds severe. Now, with the snow flying and the squalls hurling themselves over the low, sandy shores with hurricane force, the scene was dismal enough for any pilot to contemplate. Captain Kidd had passed his examinations. He had kept cool and found that calm poise when debating with the examining doctor was better than growing hot and losing his temper. Christian Science had done something for him. He was learning to hold himself well in hand, for he had been called Captain Kidd from his piratical habits, one of which had been tearing loose in real piratical style. How much age aided his scientific deductions he would not, and probably could not, tell. It was his week in the pilot boat at the capes, and Ezra smiled at the thought.

"Hope the little rat'll git a heavy one and beach her—he's as like to do it as not—takin' it easy all the time and never allowin' nothin' to rub him up none. A feller can't jest sit down and take things easy if he's any good; he's bound to be nervous and strugglin' to git along, frettin' and fumin'. When a fellow gits so old he ain't no more good, then it's time enough to grow that calm spell. Everything that causes Kidd to move about is error. His eyes ain't none too good, but he says there ain't no sech thing as sickness or bad sight—jest plain error, you thinks it—it ain't really so," he said to the bunch at Stringhalt's.

"You never let 'em make no hoptoad out of you, did you, Ezra?" asked Sam Cornwell.

"I didn't—'n' that's a fact. Fancy that miserable little rat of a doctor pokin' me an' then askin' me to hop fer him—yes, hop."

"That was to see if your heart was strong," vouchsafed Walcott.

"Yaas, that ware it," said Elee, the bos'n of the fishing steamer *Wind*, now lying at the wharf. "I heard tell of that thing often—they does it in the navy always—makes you hop about like a toad frog and then feels your pulse to see if it winds up any to speak of."

"Well, if they makes you a hoptoad fer to feel your heart, what would they do to make your liver work—hey? Answer me that," asked Ezra.

"I dunno," subsided the bos'n.

"No, an' no one else, either."

This apparently clinched the matter, although Sam Cornwall ventured something about mercury. They hugged the stove in silence while the deep, booming thunder of the bar fell upon their ears with renewed force.

"Seems to me there's an almighty sea on to-day," said Stringhalt. "Never heard the Bullbeggor roar so loud." A heavier squall than usual tore past, and the thunder of the surf was drowned in the scream of the hurricane. The little house fairly rocked with the force of the gale.

"Well, there ain't no one, fool enough to try comin' in to-day, anyhow, so Kidd'll be safe enough—there's Jackson and Samuels ahead of him, anyhow, and there's no chance of both goin' out."

"I seen a ship going toward Norfolk at daylight," said the bos'n.

"Yaas, and I seen one lying down in Lynnhaven before eight bells, and she ain't there now—sea too heavy for her," said Stringhalt.

"The tail of the Whalebank'll drift full fifty fathom after this," said Ezra, peering out of the window at the turmoil several miles away to the northward.

"Let her drift—what do you care?" asked Boloney, the motorman of the tram car which ran through the hamlet in good weather.

"Not me—I don't care no more," said Ezra sadly.

A soft step sounded at the door, and a woman's form appeared. Ezra stood up as the door opened and Mrs. Ezra poked in her head, wrapped in a shawl.

"Y'ain't pilotin' none abouts, air ye?" she snapped at her husband.

"Not jest now," he stammered.

"Well, then git a move on yer an' help me git them hawgs in from the back field—the tide is halfway up to the yard, a foot deep, an' if it rises any higher we'll be afloat afore night." Ezra obediently went.

"Poor Ezra, he takes it right hard, don't he?" asked Boloney.

The rest nodded assent. One watched the old pilot's back as he walked through the storm behind his old wife to corral the "hawgs."

Ezra managed to get the stock in shelter and wandered about the kitchen aimlessly, peering out of the window at intervals.

"If you want to go back to the loafers' union, go—don't mind me," said his wife. "I'll get Amanda to help me indoors."

Amanda, nineteen and rosy with health, smiled at her father. "Go ahead, pop; don't stick around here if you get any fun with that gang at Stringhalt's—bring home a gallon of kerosene when you come back."

In the meager furnishings of the room, Ezra towered, bent and sullen. His whole life had now changed. Even his dog, Rex, a fine collie, eyed him with suspicion. Rex lay upon a hole in the cheap handmade rug, close to the edge of the table. Mrs. Ezra had trained him to lie upon this hole. It was the only break in the barren cleanliness of the room.

"I'll never git another rug—you jest lie over that hole—sort o' hides it," and the faithful animal now had grown used to placing himself on the ragged spot where the needle had failed to make a remedy. Rex had long ago ceased to rise at a newcomer and steadfastly held the hole, as if within his good dog's heart he was trying to hide something he was ashamed of.

"Come on, ole fellow, let's take a look at the bar," said Ezra after a long silence.

Ezra, muffled to the ears with an old scarf, went slowly down to the little wharf where he kept his power dory. The dory was a perfect sea boat, very able, and engined with twice as much power as was usual in such a small craft. He could see out into the channel, and he could hear the rumble of the breaking seas which fell upon the end of the Bullbeggor Bank. It was thick outside, snowing a little, and blowing heavily from the northeast. It was a real winter storm of the worst description. Ezra was sorrowful when he thought that he might never again be able to go forth into one and pilot ships into the harbor.

Piloting had been his very life. He knew the mouth of the Chesapeake as he knew the pathways to his own little home. The war had put things on a naval footing, and all men following the sea were supposed to either follow the navy or be at least under naval discipline. Examinations were in vogue, and no one was supposed to do work in ships without passing strict physical as well as mental examination. The mental part Ezra could pass, as it consisted of just ordinary reading and writing and showing time really passed in his work as pilot, with certificates from those who had known him during the proper periods. The physical had stumped him, for he had grown angry at the doctor. Otherwise he would have easly passed, like the runt, Captain Kidd.

Now he would have to do something else for a living—probably fish and oyster to make ends meet, while Amanda might get a job as teacher in the little school. Amanda was bright and had a high-school training. Also, she was very pretty and healthy, a good, strong young woman of the farm type. Amanda always was gentle with old Ezra, although Mrs. Ezra was addicted to combativeness. She was bound to be worse with the old man hanging around the house in the way of her cooking and smelling the place up with his reeking tobacco which he smoked and chewed. He was not allowed to spit at the stove.

Ezra stood behind the lean-to of the slip and watched the surf pile over the bar a couple of miles out. Nothing showed coming through the storm, and he talked to his dog.

"Down an' out, Rex—I'm through, they says—jest you an' me left to loaf round together."

Rex wagged his tail. He understood perfectly, but he would rather his master went back to the store, where Stringhalt would have a good fire. He gazed up with collie eyes at Ezra, gave a little bark, a whine, and started as if to show the way. But Ezra was too downhearted to face the bunch again. He leaned gloomily against the boards, partly sheltered from the wind and snow, and his thoughts were sad indeed.

The naval tug *Mastodon* was bound down the bay and ran right into the center of the storm. It was very thick, and she ran slowly under one bell, for her captain was not a good bay pilot. Aboard her was the naval doctor of that district, who was bound for the base at Norfolk, and he sat in the warm pilothouse, which, heated by steam, was comfortable enough.

The worried air of the captain was noticed by the doctor.

"Mean weather, isn't it?" he said. "Thicker than burgoo, and then they have old fellows that have only one foot this side of the grave piloting ships through this man's country. Hope you don't hit anything below."

"It's thick enough, but I reckon I'll make it all right—that Whalebank Shoal shifts sometimes in a northeaster, and the Bullbeggor often makes well out, filling in with the high tides—I'll stop her and anchor if it don't let up some soon."

"I sure hope you don't stop her. I'm a day late as it is," said the medico gravely. "Hook her up and jam her through. You know the way, don't you?"

"Yes, I know the way, all right; but it's getting worse and worse," said the captain, who was a bos'n's mate in rating, a chief petty officer.

"Better steer to the right a little and get well out—what?" said the medico.

"Say, can that right and left stuff—have we got to have a newspaper editor tell us how to run ships? I'll keep her to starboard until I pass the end of the Pinfeather Reef, and then, if it don't show signs of clearing, I'm going to anchor—right in the channel. If it wasn't for this awful sea, I'd anchor, anyhow."

"I see something to the left——"

"Yeah, you see a buoy to port, you mean—that's the big can buoy at the tail of the Pinfeather," snapped the captain, who was talking now to a three striper, for the medico rated as a commander and wore the stripes of one. Democracy! Yes, it was all right enough.

But the whirling tides and the heavy winds, with the shifting sand below, had misplaced the big can buoy. They were right over the end of the reef, and the sudden snort of a breaking sea startled the captain. It also brought a yell from the man on lookout.

"Breakers right ahead, sir!" came the cry.

Instantly there was a dull crash, a sudden, heavy jar, and the medico commander, who had stood up,

was thrown against the bluejacket at the wheel. The gob gave a grunt and let go the spokes, while the wheel, released, flew over with a whirl. The tug came broadside to the sea and fell off, taking one right over her side, flooding her decks and after structure. She had hit and was fast on the reef.

With reversed engines going at full speed she tried to draw clear, but each succeeding sea threw her higher and higher upon the edge of the Pinfeather, and she lay down until the sea broke clear over her in a mighty smother. Men rushed about and strove to do something, but it was no use. She was doomed. The engineer reported the water coming in fast, and, as she was an old tub of a boat, built of wood, she had no chance. The captain ordered the boat out, for she was fast filling, and it would not be safe to remain aboard her very long. She would fill and break up in that sea. The boat went down to leeward and was instantly smashed alongside. Another was dropped and was cut adrift before the men could get into her. She drifted off with three men in her, who took to the oars and held her head to the seas and strove to regain the ship. They could not make it, and finally drifted out of sight.

"What'll we do?" howled the medico.

"Stay in her and wait—that's all. We can't do anything else," said the captain savagely. He was now sorry he had not anchored sooner. He had put it off too long for the commander doctor who was in a hurry, and he had lost his vessel.

The sea was almost as high within the capes as it was outside of them. The tug hammered and swung, jarred herself up and down on the sand, and filled to her deck strakes. She was breaking up. Part of her superstructure tore away with a huge sea. The men crowded up near the pilot house, but that would not stand long, as the sea struck heavily below and was breaking clear the supports, the structure under it.

Half an hour passed, and nothing could be done. It looked very bad, indeed, and there was no way to signal, as the small wireless was swept away at the first smash. There was nothing to do but wait for it to ease up or some one come along and save them. She might last a few hours or more, but not likely.

The six men left in her with the doctor and captain had to wait for help and hope for safety from outside.

Stringhalt was talking to the bunch and wanted to know why the fast fighting craft of the secondary fleet were called destroyers.

"Well," said Cornwell, the constable, "they done proved what the name means fer them—they done destroyed a whole fleet out on the California coast. Rammed nigh the whole bunch ashore on a day like this here—I calls them destroyers, right enough, but you might call 'em torpedo boats if you want to go back to beginnings."

The door opened, and Ezra came in hastily.

"Tug ashore on the outer end of the Pinfeather—come along, one of yez, and go with me in my dory—we got to hustle," he snapped.

Dave Chiselstick, young and powerful, agreed to go with him. They started right back at a run, the rest following them slowly and hoping old Ezra would not need any more hands. Two men were enough for that dory, anyhow. Ezra cast off the lines while Dave started the motor. Then away they went down the slue toward the open water that showed a quarter of a mile farther out of the mouth of the creek. The two masts of a tug were seen dimly through the flying snow and drift, and the masts were leaning very much to one side, showing that the tug had grounded fast and was lying over.

The motor roared out its exhaust, and the dory went very fast. Ezra had a powerful engine; he believed in plenty of power, for days just like this when power is pure gold. You never had too much if the boat would carry it and not drag.

The sea outside was met with a rising fling from the dory. She tossed her bows high in the air and brought them down with a smack and bounce that told of a buoyancy and seaworthiness for which dories of this class are noted. She drove along at seven knots through a white sea and shipped little heavy water, although she threw it in clouds over her in the form of flying spray. Ezra steered. Dave sat at the engine.

They neared the hull and saw men crowding about the pilot house. They swung around under her stern and came up to leeward, drawing quite close in and hailing the men.

"I'll take ye ashore—if you want to go. Stand by to jump!" yelled Ezra. Dave released the clutch, and the engine ran free while the dory came right alongside, close enough for a man to spring into her but not close enough to hit the side of the tug. Ezra had Dave ready to either reverse or drive ahead at an instant's notice, should a backwash heave them against the vessel's side.

One by one they jumped; all but one gained the dory without getting overboard. The last man was the doctor commander, who, not being used to jumping into small boats in heavy seas, missed the distance and was dragged into the dory as Ezra yelled for Dave to shoot ahead full speed. He had a good look at the rescued man, and stared hard and long at him while the dory ran for the shelter of the slue. They gained the entrance without disaster, although the boat, now heavy, shipped two seas that almost sank her. Men bailed frantically and got her clear before she entered the smooth water of the creek. Then she drew up at the little dock.

Men waited to meet them, Stringhalt in the fore, with the constable near him. They helped the

soaked men out and to dry ground, the doctor commander remaining to the last.

Old Ezra glared at him.

"Hop out; hop on your left foot—you pill-eating son—of—of a sea cook!" snarled the old pilot.

The doctor gazed at him, suddenly remembered him, and tried to smile.

"Hop, you blamed toad—hop or I'll throw ye out. Hop on your left foot—an' then keep on hopping on your right until ye get away from here—go—hop," and he made as if to do the doctor some harm.

The doctor obeyed him, climbed heavily out of the boat, and made his way to Stringhalt's store, where he sent word of the disaster to the base by way of the cape. The C. P. O., the captain, wired in his report at the same time. Mr. Boloney, the motorman of the tram which ran at times when there were passengers, offered to take them all down to the town—and they went with him.

Ezra came into Stringhalt's place and sat gloomily by the stove. All saw him and had much to ask, but they remembered his way with the officer. Dave Chiselstick grinned broadly.

"Sure made the officer hop, didn't ye, old man?" said Dave, after a silence during which all exchanged glances and smiled.

Ezra grunted.

"Seems like he sprained his ankle or something—he limped when Boloney yelled fer them to git into the car," said one.

Ezra grunted again and smiled a sickly smile. Then he bit off a large chew of tobacco and spat accurately at the stove, hitting it fairly.

Two days later he received a letter bearing an official address, and he showed it to the crowd. It told him he had passed the physical examination and that, if he would appear before the inspector of the district, he would get his pilot's license.

Captain Jones, of the towing company which had undertaken to tow coal on the coast in wintertime, stood upon the little bridge deck forward of his pilot house, and looked back into the gathering gloom of the winter night. The long steel line stretching away to the first barge looked like a spider web, although it was six inches in diameter. It was long, and it looked thin in the distance. The seas washed across it and submerged much of its length, making it rise and fall as the barge plunged. Far astern he could make out the loom of the second barge, showing black in the white wake of the vessels.

It was a good half mile from where he stood to the second barge, and Captain Jones tried to see if she was towing steadily, not sheering, for she was the hulk of the *Flying Cloud*, one-time crack clipper of the Yankee deep-water fleet. The gathering darkness shut in, the lifting seas of the Atlantic to the eastward increased, and the snow squalls of a winter gale began to shut off all sight of the dependent vessels which he held by the long steel cable.

"That's a hard tow, and a rough tow—we'll have trouble during the night of it gets much worse," said he to the mate who had come up. "Better blow for those fellows to veer out more line and parcel up good for trouble. The wind is going to blow nor'east, and it's going to be bad, mighty bad—I'm sorry we started out. Better have laid up in the Roads for a day or two. I'm afraid there'll be trouble in our wake to-night. This beach is bad enough in an easterly, and it'll be a dead lee shore all the way up."

They had passed outside of the capes and were heading north for Boston. The roar of the siren sounded over the wild sea as the tug's head was put more to the eastward, and the men steering the barges swung them into line, swung them slowly and sullenly until they were now almost heading right into the sea, while they parceled up a new section of line and then veered it until the new part took up on the hawse. The huge tug, the *Storm King*, was just a black blot, with her towing lights showing, but they knew she was waiting for them to make ready for the wild night ahead. Then, with nearly full speed ahead, the tug stood up the coast, making about six knots with the tow.

Ezra was at the wheel of the last barge. The icy wind and flying drift caused the snow to stick to his gray beard and freeze there, and his old eyes were red and watery with the chill. He held the spokes sturdily and gazed ahead to see what the tug would do. Then, when the tow straightened out again and the lines were snug, he relapsed again into the mechanical movement of steering, now and then gazing aloft where he used to see skysails on the hull he steered. The *Flying Cloud* had crossed three skysails yards when he had sailed in her, years before, and she had filled her large topsails with the winds of the seas. It was queer, that looking aloft to see nothing but a deep blackness where he should have seen the dull gleam of white canvas showing through the night.

But he was very cold, and he was remembering her as she had been. The piercing blast cut through his thin and worn clothes, and the icy slush came through his worn boots. His feet were freezing cold. The fingers upon the wheel spokes were numb with cold, but his gloves protected them a little. He would gaze aloft now and then, and memories of the past flitted through his mind, vivid, real, and made him mutter things. It had been his ship, his last command before he had gone into piloting up and down the coast.

In the dreary night his mind wandered back to the days when she was not a dirty, decrepit old coal barge, with the stumps of her lower masts sticking from her foul decks. The foremast, which was good for holding a light, was now dimly as it had been in former years. He would see palm trees

waving in the tropic wind, hear the rustle of huge fronds and all the low melody of tropic sounds, the sunlight on the sea, and the sound of the surf on the shore. Old Ezra was more than half asleep, but he steered with a certain deliberate sureness while he dreamed through the bitter hours of his watch on deck. Yes, it was all there before him, the day of his youth, his strength; and, instead of the wild, black ocean, he saw glimpses of the sunlight on the sea, the deep-azure sea of the South.

"Northeast by east, half east," he murmured softly. "Let her go at that, sir. Steady, steady so——" And the forms of men he had known loomed up in the gloom of that winter night. He saw them as they had been—in the sunshine—his wife he loved and who had made many voyages with him; but she was young and beautiful, a beautiful girl. The children—yes, they had gone, one by one—the rustling of the palm trees told of a place where the trade winds blow steadily and where the green earth was marked in mounds.

He was not dreaming of his home of old age, the fighting wife, the grown daughter, the store where the pilots and boatmen gathered, old man Stringhalt's place on the cape. Then he saw Captain Kidd, the pilot he knew and who had sailed with him years ago. Kidd was now in the regular cape shift, but then he was nothing but a seaman, and not a very good one, at that. He had to get after Kidd.

"Take a pull in that main t'gallant brace," he muttered through lips now blue with cold. "Weather cro'jack brace—there! How's she headin', Kidd?"

A cold winter sea rose out of the night and smote the old barge heavily. The wind was increasing. There was a distant roar sounding over the sea. He roused for an instant—the *Storm King* was calling—but he relapsed again into the dreamy state, and the bitter cold hurt him little—he was captain of the *Flying Cloud* and he was going out to sea.

The night grew wilder, the gale roared over the hulk, the snow struck with more force and caused little streams of water to flow from the old man's eyes, which ran down and froze upon his beard. It was growing late. Aboard the tug, two bells had struck off, but the old man didn't know it; he had forgotten time and did not hear. He would hold her until eight bells—which had struck and gone an hour before—when his barge mate, Jorgsen, the Dutchman, would relieve him. Jorgsen was below, lying easily in his bunk and not bothering about the old pilot who was even now standing part of his watch for him. He was awake, but read the sporting extra and waited to be called. What if he was not hurried? It was bitter on deck, and he would not go up willingly.

"To blazes with this life!" he growled as the rising note of the tug's siren broke through the uproar. "That's blowing for more line—must be getting bad." Then he thought of the old captain, the pilot at the wheel. "Let him stand it—he's used to it. To blazes with a company that will send a man out with a half-crazy old fool like him, talkin' of t'gallant'ls, tops'ls, an' the like in an old coal barge—yeah, let him stay up there if he hasn't got sense enough to call me."

Old Ezra kept her on her course right behind the tow, though he began to wonder why Jorgsen had not showed on deck. He felt that it was time, but had heard no bells strike. Instinctively he felt that he was standing a longer watch than he had to. He was about to call below to see what was the matter—but he would wait a little longer, wait until the bells struck, for no good seaman ever anticipated the bells.

"Northeast by east, half east," he muttered. "You kin take a pull in that weather-main-topsail brace. Mr. Jenkins. I reckon you might as well roll up them royals—blowing a bit to-night."

The *Flying Cloud* was deep. She was loaded with three thousand tons of soft coal, and her decks were well down. The heavy seas broke now with a dull crash over her waist and washed, white and ghastly, across her in the blackness. It was dangerous to go forward along the main deck. Jorgsen knew it, and he was not thinking of doing it. He was thinking of the lights of the city streets, the pleasures of shore—and here he was in an old hulk at sea in midwinter. Let her go to the devil. What did he care for the company, a company that would send him to sea with a crazy old man, even though he happened to be a sailorman?

There was the *Squedink*, the head barge. She was manned by two younger men, and Hackett had his wife with him and two half-grown sons to do the dirty work. All could stand at trick at the wheel in any weather. Five of them, yes, five—and here he was with just one old sailor, a pilot of the capes, a crazy old duffer who talked of sails, topsails, and cro'jacks. Well, let the old fellow talk—and stand watch.

The siren was roaring out again over the sea, sounding above the noise of the gale. It must be getting bad, very bad, indeed. The Dutchman turned out with an oath. The light in the cuddy lamp showed him that it was half after ten, or nearly three hours over his time. He should have gone up at eight and relieved the old man. It would be nearer eleven before he took charge. Maybe the old fellow had dropped dead—better see, anyhow; she was steering badly and sheering about. And that hawser—he would have to give it more slack if it got worse—and it was his job to do it. But he'd let the old man go forward and do it—he was a sailor.

He would take the wheel while he did it and then get below on some excuse and have a quiet smoke and a drink of rum—to the devil with the old hulk and skipper with it. Why should he care? He'd quit the whole thing just as soon as he got his

pay. He'd had enough coasting in wintertime. He pulled on his rubber boots and buttoned up his oilskins, preparing to go on deck. He took a small nip of rum and then thumped up the companionway.

The whirl of the wind struck him in the face as he came out on deck, and a spurt of flying snow took away his breath. He could see nothing in the blackness. He swore loudly and listened. He heard the voice of old Ezra, at the wheel: "Northeast by east, half east—steady as you go."

It came in a monotone through the mingled sounds of the gale. He gazed into the blackness aft. Old Ezra was close to him, and as his eyes grew more accustomed to the darkness he made out the form of the old man at the wheel. A step brought him to his side.

"Pretty bad, eh?" he bawled into his ear. "Blowing for line—what?"

Ezra gave a slight start, came more fully awake.

"Yes, it's a bad night, Mr. Jenkins—get them topsails in and reef and foresail—what? Blowing for line? The tug, eh? Oh, yes—well, you take the wheel and I'll go forrads and parcel up a bit first—won't do to get it chafed a night like this. Northeast by east, half east—that's the course—right after the tug. Them's her lights you see ahead there—headin' off shore a piece. Gettin' dirty; going to have a heavy easterly to-night."

Jorgsen took the wheel. A mighty sea broke over the hulk, washing white across the main deck, and the dull, rushing roar of the water sounded ugly.

"It may be a charity to keep an old fool like that in a ship, but it ain't human," muttered the man, peering into the binnacle, where a tiny oil lamp burned and showed the lubber's mark half a point off the course. He rolled the spokes over, cursing. He had just gotten her straightened out when another sea swept her with a thunderous rush amidships.

Ezra made his way forward. He went slowly, being stiff and half frozen from the long trick at the wheel—probably Jorgsen overslept, but Mr. Jenkins never did that—he would parcel up a bit of the line just inside the bitter end and let it come up on the chocks and hawse. That would be all he could do, all she had. It was an awful jerking strain that it would have to stand in that sea, but he remembered that the *Flying Cloud* had towed off a lee shore before. It was hard to dodge the water, but he made his way along the rail, sometimes waist-deep. It was warm, as compared to the air.

That fellow Jorgsen was a tough man, he thought, but he talked too loud of what he did ashore. He did not do so much at sea. He must attend to him later.

Sheltered from the seas by the towing bitts, old Ezra handled the hawser and veered it out in a shipshape and seamanlike manner. It was dark and howling out there, but his knowing hands worked fast in spite of their stiffness. It was just before midnight when he gave her the last of the line, while Jorgsen stood at the wheel and cursed and swore at him for an old duffer. He wanted to go below again and get another drink. What did he care for the old fellow's orders? What, indeed?

Aboard the tug, the mate stood near the towing bitts. The whirl of water thrust from the heavily loaded wheel roared and foamed astern. The wind snored a dull, sonorous note, and the snow squalls made the night even blacker than before. Captain Jones, still in the warm pilot house which was heated by steam, stood at the wheel and held the lubber's mark on the course.

The sea was growing worse, but he could still hold her. The giant tug could stand a great deal, being built for the heaviest work on the coast. A mighty power lay deep within her hull, a power of many hundred horses. The helmsman stood opposite Jones, silently gazing ahead and trying to see through the darkness. The strain upon the steel towline was terrific. The tug plunged and rose again upon huge seas, and at each forward plunge she put many tons upon that steel line.

"Heaven help the poor devils—if she goes to looard to-night—my Lord, what a sea!" he muttered, half to himself and half to the helmsman.

The mate would not turn in. He stood there in the stern, watching that thread leading out into the night, the steel thread that connected them with those in the barges. It seemed at times that it slacked, dipped deep, close in the wake. But it would surge up again and again, and the towing bitts would groan and creak with the mighty strain. He watched it and dreaded the order he expected, the order to cut adrift, for the *Storm King* was now heading right straight into the teeth of the hurricane and was hardly steering. If she swung off without steering way she would fall away into the trough of the sea and would have to save herself. She was barely holding her own. A little wisp of steam showed in the blackness aloft, where it came from the blowoff. She was steamed up to the limit and still not holding ahead any.

Jones knew he had to send some men to their death, and forbore to do it. He knew he must cut adrift if he would save those in his ship. He could not hold on much longer. Yet he hesitated to give the order. The *Storm King* rose and plunged, dropping her high steel nose deep into the oncoming seas and jerking the towline taut as a piano wire. All forward would disappear in a smother of foam. The engineer reported that he could give her no more steam. He had done all he could. They were upon a lee shore in winter, and there was no help for it. They must save themselves.

"See if you can get the bottom right, Mr. Slaver," said Jones to the second mate, who had come up. "We'll hold on until we strike ten fathoms—after that——"

Old Ezra made his way aft to the steering wheel of the *Flying Cloud*. Jorgsen still had her.

"You take her minute while I git a bit of tobacco," said Jorgsen. "East half north—that's w'at she's doin' now, sir—we're headin' offshore for fair an' I hopes we make it."

Old Ezra took the spokes of the wheel without comment. It was irregular in a way, but where there were but two, and one captain, it was often done. The old seaman was getting a little hazy in his mind from suffering and the long watch, and discipline was forgotten.

"East half north," he repeated, peering into the dim binnacle.

Jorgsen went below for his tobacco. He grinned. What? Turn out again in a hurry—well, not exactly. He would first have a bit of a nip and a quiet smoke. Put on an extra pair of dry socks—feet got cold up there—and then there was the cabin lamp and the sporting sheet—gosh, what a night to be at sea! He pulled out a bottle from his locker and took a long pull of neat poison—too bad there was no more whisky to be had and a man must either drink poison or go dry—when he got to Philadelphia the next tow——

On deck Ezra waited at the wheel and finally forgot all about the skulker below. He had a vision of a ship sailing tropic seas, for the bitter cold had numbed his circulation until he was almost insensible. He saw the sunshine, the soft murmurs of tropic wind through the rigging above him where all was now black chaos, sounded to his numbed senses as in a dream. The *Flying Cloud*—what a name—Mr. Jenkins, the mate, had been captain of a big ship before, and he was proud of the vessel, played with the children of the coolies, but watched his men.

"East half north, Mr. Jenkins. I'll not let her get to north'ard of that, sir."

Jorgsen below was enjoying a pipe. "Bet the duffer will be takin' in his royals about now," he grinned to himself. He would go on deck in a short time—but there was no hurry, the old pilot could do nothing about it but report him. He was going ashore soon anyhow. It was hard to read with this plunging and surging motion—she was straining mighty bad, he thought, but she was not making much noise below.

Old ships are quiet. The new ones make the noise when strainig and tell of good sound wood. Old wood is quiet, silent and goes without a murmur to its end. He would look after the pumps soon—not yet—what was that?

There was a slight ease in the pull ahead. The sea which had been swamping her decks forward began to sweep her upon the port side. There was trouble above, something had happened—she was falling off, falling sideways into the trough of an awful sea. The faint roar of the tug's siren told the tale—what if the line had gone—— Good heavens!

Jorgsen threw away his sporting paper and started up.

The mate on the tug had been watching the straining line. Suddenly the tug rose upon a huge sea, the steel tow-line became slack as she sat back on the side of the lee side of a giant wave—then she plunged headlong down the slope into the hollow, down, down and still down. The mate held his breath. That was an awful sea. Would that line hold? Lord! what a strain! Then she reached the bottom of the trough, and began to rise again.

She rose upward, rose until her bows were high, and then poised for an instant upon the crest, as if tired and resting for a fraction of a second, then again she plunged headlong down the weather slope and the line took up the strain. The mate looked at it with awe. There was a sudden whir of steel wires. The line became slack. The mate strained his eyes into the gloom astern and saw the line leading down into the churned foam of the tug's wake—it had gone at last. The end had come.

He rushed for the bridge. The siren roared out its warning, rising and reverberating above the roar of the gale, the noise of the wind and seas. The *Storm King* plunged ahead and drove her bows out of sight into a hill of water, for she was now free and going ahead full speed. The sea washed her forward decks, rolled up clear to her bridge and smothered her, running down into the engine room through ventilators and causing the fire crew to wonder. Jones set the telegraph at slow, then made ready to swing his ship and try to save those astern of him. He called down to the engineer to stand by. He might be able to do something—but not much.

The sudden falling off aroused old Ezra from his tropic dream. He was now watchful and alert. He knew what had happened and he roared out for Jorgsen.

"Get the fore topsail—I mean the forestaysail on her—we'll have to run her in—she's gone adrift. Wheel's hard up—we'll try and beach her. Take the wheel while I get out the lead and try for the bottom—west half south. West half south—do you hear, damn you—keep her west half south, you squarehead or I'll brain you," he yelled to Jorgsen, who took the wheel.

He took the wheel mechanically. The old ship's head paid off slowly. She went off until the sea took her on her port beam. The forestaysail was a matter of reality, for she carried two sails upon the stumps of her masts to steady her and ease her steering in a cross sea. Old Ezra loosed the forestaysail, but it blew away before he could hoist it up. He was too old and tired, and it is doubtful if any one could have gotten it even half up in the gale. Anyhow she was going off, heading off before the wind and sea and would soon be upon the sands. He was very tired and cold, but he must save his

crew, Jorgsen. It was his duty. Nothing could save the barge. She was doomed.

Jorgsen, standing alone at the wheel, became panic-stricken. He seemed to hear the dull thunder of the surf. The lights of the *Storm King* came abreast of him and Jones was giving them a parting salute on his siren—he was saying good-by. That meant the end!

Captain Jones swung up and around. He could do nothing in the night in that wind and sea. He was powerless, and it was no use losing his tug just for sentiment. He would try to get line to the first barge, but that was all that he could hope for and that was next to impossible. He swung up again and steamed ahead.

Jorgsen left the wheel. Panting, gasping between seas which washed him about the decks, he made his way forward before the old pilot knew it. Ezra was first warned of his desertion by the old hulk starting to broach to again. He crawled aft again to see what had happened and found the wheel deserted, no one there. He rolled the wheel up again and gradually the *Flying Cloud* swung off again. Ezra held her true for the beach and roared for his man, who heeded him not at all but strove, now, with all his energy, to get an anchor clear. The starboard anchor lashed with twelve-strand stuff resisted his efforts and Jorgsen cut through the cat lashings hurriedly. With a capstan bar he pried the fluke clear and away roared the cable, two hundred fathoms of it. As he did this a hand grasped his shoulder. Old Ezra was upon him—but it was too late, the anchor had gone.

The *Flying Cloud* brought up in five fathoms at the end of her cable and then began to drag slowly in. Had she run headlong in she might have gotten close enough to have gained the help of the coast guard with its gun line. As it was she struck on the outer shoal and pounded for three hours and stove in her entire bottom, sinking finally in less than three fathoms where the surf swept her and tore her apart.

Ezra went aft when it was over and he saw the disaster. He could do nothing now and it was only a question of how long she would hold together. He stood at the wheel and soon became numb with the cold. The ship lying along broadside to the sea, gave a little shelter to him as the wheel box and gear was to windward. It kept him from being washed off and overboard. He stood there, lashed himself to the gear, and there they found him in the gray light of the winter morning.

The coast guard life-saving outfit was on the job as soon as they could see to work. They saw a large ship in the breakers and some one saw the form of the man at the wheel. A shot was fired but no one took the line and they saw that it was a case of boat work.

The lifeboat came off before daybreak and through an awful surf which nearly lost them. Making an offing, the captain of the guard came slowly in alongside and yelled to the form at the wheel. There was no answer. He came as close as he dared in the fierce sea, yelled again and again. Then he saw the man was dead.

Old Ezra was standing at the wheel and he was covered with ice. His beard was a mass of frozen snow and water and his dead hands held the spokes frozen there solidly. He was an awful sight to behold and even the hardened men of the lifeboat looked askance at his figure. He had died there evidently giving and taking orders from his old mate, Mr. Jenkins, of the great clipper *Flying Cloud, crack* packet of a long dead line.

"My heavens—what a death!" muttered a man of the life crew. "We might have saved him if he had run her ashore on the beach—hadn't dropped that anchor."

"Port oars, there, swing her around, bullies—steady," came the order from the guard captain, and he ran in through the surf to safety.

The news went down the beach quickly and at Stringhalt's store the crowd spoke of it in low tones as if afraid of the dead old pilot.

Dave Chiselstick gave it as his opinion that Ezra was growing too old, had gotten too old to take out ships—but he sure had been a man in his day. "Yeah, that's what comes of this snivel sarvice business," assented Captain Kidd. "Ought to have made him quit when he couldn't pass—he was too old."

"I don't know," said the constable, "I think he died as he wished—it was a good way for a good man to go—at his work to the end—he died like a man."

There was silence, the men about the stove seemed lost in thought.

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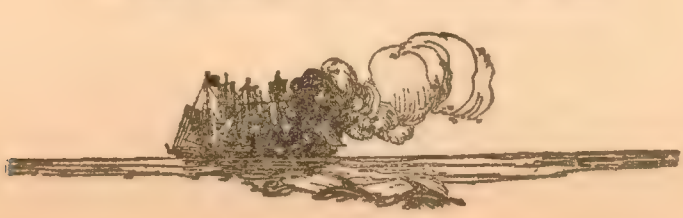

THE SHIP I LOVE

A gallant ship was laboring, laboring in the sea,
The captain stood among his crew. "Gather round," said he.
"The ship is doomed and sinking; there to the lee is land,
So launch the boats and pull away, but here at my post I'll stand.

Chorus.

"Good-by, my lads, good-by; good-by, my lads, good-by;
I'll stick to the ship, lads; you save your lives.
I've no one to love me; you've children and wives.
You take to the boats, lads, praying to Heaven above,
And I'll go down in the angry deep with the ship I love."

The crew stood hesitating, their hearts were stanch and true.
With tear-dimmed eyes up spoke the mate, "Sir, we will die
with you!"
The captain cried, "What! Mutiny? Am I not captain here?
Then launch the boats and pull away, and think of your
children dear.

"Good-by, my lads, good-by; good-by, my lads," et cetera.

The storm raged fierce round the sinking wreck,
As the captain stood on the wave-washed deck.
The good ship struggled, like a thing of life,
And the timbers groaned in the angry strife.

"Good-by, my lads, good-by," et cetera.

Slowly, slowly sinking is she,
But the captain brave—ah, where is he?
Down he goes to a sailor's grave,
As his last words echoed far o'er the wave:
"Good-by, my lads, good-by."

THE ROLLING DANE

BY TOM ROAN

Mutiny stalked the decks of The Rolling Dane, *and Captain Yonson lay in irons. But queer things happen in the best-regulated mutinies—as "Big Bill" Trotter was to discover. There were others to whom a surprise was due, not the least of them "Beezer" Smith with a pair of six-shooters in his hands and murder in his heart. So the thing began.*

A DEAD man lay grinning on the cabin roof with the whole side of his head smashed by the blow of a capstan bar from behind. His long legs were stretched apart, his head rolled a little to one side and his arms flung out in such a manner that he was likened to a tall, bewhiskered scarecrow.

Jim Cage, mate of *The Rolling Dane,* was a part of the mess of the mutiny that still remained untouched by the victorious crew.

The trouble had started just out of the Solomons—started in the old bald-headed schooner's forecastle where trouble generally starts on the trackless waters of the world's endless oceans. Jim Cage had received the worst of it, and Captain Olaf Yonson had been dethroned from his place of wisdom on the after deck.

But the trouble was not over. More heads were to be broken before the stanch little schooner dumped her cargo of copra and tortoise shell in San Francisco—the home port that lay countless miles ahead.

Captain Yonson was still unconscious from the blow of a belaying pin on the top of the head. He came back to life slowly—like the gradual end of a terrible nightmare, of which, for a time, he had no recollection at all—and with a dull sensation of fatigue in his long-legged body and a vacant stare in his one gray eye.

He sat slumped in his chair, his bony chin resting upon his breast and his gnarled hands hanging limply at his sides. He had a vague recollection of some sort of trouble. But that was all. He saw light—sunshine streaming through the open doorway on the starboard side of *The Rolling Dane's* cabin—and realized that it was something appeasing to the eye.

But he could make neither head nor tail of it. It was just a slab of something that was fascinating—a slab of something to gaze upon without physical feelings of discomfort. Nothing else seemed to matter, for he was tired, and nothing else seemed to exist but the sloppy baldness of the sea that rose and fell beyond the rail that stood on the outer side of the runway.

For all Yonson knew, the thing in front of him was a wall of solidity that reeled and rocked with the lift and plunge of the sea. He was dazzled by

its brightness and made dizzy by the constant shifting of its up-and-down motion. It never occurred to him that he had been looking upon that same patch of brightness for hours.

Once a great fear assailed him that the wall of light would surely crash down upon him, but as the time went by and nothing happened, he grew intensely interested. It was something he could not understand, something that gripped him and bored him—a long slope that shot into a sheer cliff before him and lowered again until he sat on the top of a tall pinnacle and looked down into the blank space of nothing but thin air.

Sometimes, it receded from him in the most jerky fashion. Then it would rush back, its terrible silence and infinite emptiness threatening to swallow him and everything about him. But all fear of it had vanished. So he sprawled back in his chair—the full six feet of him—and just looked at it with a speculative eye as to whether it would turn clear over and shoot up from the wrong direction, or whether it would plunge completely out of sight on its downward flight, and whirl back from above.

It was all very amusing. His freckled face wrinkled into a wry smile and the ends of his long, yellow mustache lifted as the smile grew into a puzzled grin. Olaf Yonson had not the slightest care in the world as to what would happen. His right eye blinked. The black patch of felt over the empty socket of the other flopped up and down as a sudden gust of wind whipped through the doorway.

At this time, another figure appeared in the wall of light and walked in it. That was another revelation. The light was not a thing of solids after all. The two-legged thing in the runway had stopped to scowl at the lanky captain. It was short and chunky. A dark stubble of beard covered its face and almost hid the dark, beady eyes and puffed lips that curled back in the most ill-humored fashion. Yonson reckoned that the confounded thing was angry about something. But he was not afraid of it.

"Say, you!" his voice lifted, and startled him. Until that moment he did not know he had a voice.

The two-legged thing in the runway removed a short, black pipe from a ragged slot that might have been called a mouth—and scowled. The latter it did easily and quickly.

"Well, say it, bloke! Ain't lost your gas, have you?" the scowler demanded.

Yonson studied the man in deep silence for several moments. Then he grinned, the tips of the yellow mustache again lifting like toy ram's horns.

"Funny, you are," he mused. "What the devil are you, anyway?"

"Oh, I guess you know, old hoss," the man in the runway returned, the inevitable scowl still upon his face and the thick lips twisted. "If it'll do you any good, though, I'm 'Beezer' Smith, a yard wide, five feet high—an' tough as hell. But you savvy, old-timer."

"Live in this blasted neighborhood, do you?" Yonson demanded bluntly.

A puzzled frown wrinkled Beezer Smith's low forehead.

"Say, bloke, what's the joke? Tryin' to stir up trouble or kid me? You knows me—knows I'm a hard-boiled bloke from Gallopin' Flat, Noo Yawk, too. But you talk like a lunatic."

Yonson just looked at the man—looked him up and down, from head to toe.

"Funny, you are," he mused again.

Beezer Smith—called Beezer on the strength of his clumsy-looking nose which resembled a frosted beet—took a step forward, his face turning sickly yellow with rage and his hands clenching into two knotty lumps of fists.

"What's all the lunatic beefin' about, bloke?" he demanded. "Want another biff on the bean to wake you up? You ain't kiddin' me, old jasper! I'll sock you, you long-legged hick!"

Other men gathered outside the doorway, attracted by the sound of Smith's boisterous tone. They craned their necks, grinning from ear to ear, until a tall, square-shouldered man elbowed his way through them with an air of authority. Yonson later recognized the new-comer as "Big Bill" Trotter, a long-lipped man in a battered cap and faded coat.

"How're you feelin'?" Trotter demanded.

"Who are you?" Yonson demanded.

Some one chuckled. It was getting funny. There sat the lanky master of *The Rolling Dane*, sprawling all over his chair, glaring and blinking at them with his one good eye—and talking like a crazy man.

Beezer Smith put in a growl of comment.

"He's been a-talkin' to me that way, Bill," he grumbled. "He blows like a lunatic. I was just goin' to rap him over the dome, the one-eyed lump o' good-for-nothin' Swede. He ain't goin' to get gay with me, savvy?"

"You close your trap!" Trotter snapped. "I'm the bird that's runnin' this old hooker from now on. And I'm Captain Trotter, too. Get me, Beezer?"

"Aw, you needn't act so smart an' get on your high hoss——"

Beezer Smith's words were chopped off short. Trotter whirled upon him. The next instant, a big fist landed against the stumpy man's nose—and down went Beezer Smith, a sprawling heap of humanity on the deck.

"I'll say what I want to say!" Trotter bawled. "Don't try to pull your hard-egg stuff on me. It won't work! Get me—get me, all you birds?"

He turned to the others, his face flaming with rage and the long upper lip drawn down tight.

"I'm runnin' this old hooker now," he went on.

"What I say will go! No big-nosed bum's going to tell me where to get off. Hear me, Smith?"

Beezer made no answer. He scrambled to his feet, holding his hands against his battered nose, and wabbled forward. His time would come, he reckoned.

"Gee whiz!" Alex Duncan sputtered. "You guys ain't got no call to be a-clawin' up each other, Bill."

Duncan was a little, dried-up man in a pair of greasy trousers that were several sizes too large for him.

Trotter shook a clenched fist under his nose.

"You dry up an' keep out of it, Duncan," he warned. "I'm Captain Trotter. Get me? An' I ain't standing for no monkey business from now on —get that, too! An' don't any of you birds forget to put the handle on my name. Hear me?"

He looked at the others. Several heads nodded their approval. Others shifted their stares back to Yonson who had all but been forgotten during the row. But Big Bill Trotter was master of both the situation and *The Rolling Dane*—for the time, at any rate.

"Say, old bird," he turned back to Yonson, "what's ailin' you? Ain't you come out of it yet?"

For an answer, the former master of *The Rolling Dane* rolled his head back and laughed harshly. Another gust of wind whipped through the open doorway. The little square of black felt over his eyeless socket flopped up and down with a sudden stir. But that was all.

"Well, say something!" Trotter thundered. "Don't sit there like a rummy!"

"Like a rummy," Yonson repeated, rolling the words on his tongue.

"Yes, like a rummy!" Trotter barked. "Say something humanlike, you old buzzard, or I'll drag you outa there an' hammer your mug in flyin' shape."

Yonson laughed.

"You talk like a fool," he answered, another gust of wind starting the black patch to flop. "I don't understand you—don't even know what you're talking about.

"But, listen to me, Mr. Loud Mouth"—the one gray eye suddenly blazed—"as far as beating up somebody, why—I can knock your pug nose upside and down, and I can punch your face into a scrambled egg. You look like an overgrown monkey. I wonder how you would act if some man happened to hand you a mirror."

He broke off, laughing in a high, cracked voice that was not at all his own. The words had tumbled from him unexpectedly. In the brief silence that followed, he found himself speculating on the physical ability of the man before him. But he had only a vague idea of what he was talking about. His senses were just beginning to return.

"Oh, is that so?" Trotter snorted. "If you get fresh with me, over the side you'll go. Do you get my drift? I'm runnin' this old hooker now. What I say will go. Get me? Don't horn yourself into trouble with me, old man."

"You are still talking like a fool," Yonson grinned. "Why, I merely asked you who you were, and off the handle you fly, and you tell me how you can chew me up. Man, I can lick the face clean off of six men like you——"

He broke off. A pair of cold blue eyes had beckoned to him for silence from the outer side of the runway.

Trotter's fists clenched. His breath came quick —like a gasp. "Oh, you can, can you?" he demanded, taking a step forward.

Yonson saw the blue eyes on the outer side of the runway grow hard and piercing. A clean-faced young man with tightened lips and a great shock of dark-brown hair edged himself closer into the crowd.

"He's still daffy in the top gear, captain," the voice of "Toady" Boggs, a weak-faced little man, put in from the crowd. "He ain't all there. Wait for 'im to come out of it. Then tie into 'im an' slap his mug off. He ain't got a chanct with a husky guy like you."

Some one from the crowd put in a word of support for Toady's statement. But Big Bill Trotter had to have his say. He talked in a loud voice and snorted his disgust, but Olaf Yonson made not the slightest move. It looked as though he was about to go to sleep. His head had tilted forward. The gray eye was almost closed. He looked old and worn, but he was only thinking. His senses had returned, and without the slightest stir to cause suspicion, his one good orb was centered on the pair of cold blue eyes that gazed upon him from the gathering of men.

"And that's what's what," Trotter was saying. "Just start with me, old bird, an' you'll get your fact swiped good an' plenty."

Evidently Yonson had fallen asleep. He made no sound.

"Dump 'im over the rail, cap," "Dizzy" Jones, a regular ragamuffin, put in. "He's goin' to call this mutiny as shore as pizen's pizen. But don't let him have a chanct to blow himself to the government plugs."

"Dizzy's right, cap," another man supported. "Chuck the bum over. Put his head in a sack o' coal an' let 'im go! That'll end his chanct o' talkin' too much when he gets a chanct."

It looked as though Big Bill would obey the advice of his henchmen, but something withheld him —something that the others did not know about.

"Oh, that's all right, fellows," he assured them. "You birds are with me, all right. Real men, I call you. But he's got my drift. Hike along to the fo'c's'le, now. We'll get straightened out in a day or two. Just give me a chance."

Beezer Smith had reappeared on deck and stood

in the upper end of the runway, glaring at the crowd and listening. It looked as if he was about to say something, but he turned and wabbled back to the forecastle scuttle, groggy to a certain degree from the blow he had received from *The Rolling Dane's* new master a few minutes before.

"You, Wilson," Trotter turned to the cook, "make these birds a plum duff as big as a barrel. Good men need good grub."

"You betcha, sir," Wilson grinned. "I'll make these jaspers a wad o' sweet so bloomin' big they'll have to get a ladder to get on top o' it."

"That's what I want. Feed 'em like kings."

Trotter expected an encore. But not a sound arose from the men in the runway. They turned about slowly and straggled forward toward the forecastle.

"And you, Yonson," Trotter turned back for a parting shot, "watch your step, old man. Just one little yap out of you an' I'll have your clock fixed so quick it'll make your head swim."

Yonson made no answer. He still sat with his head down and hands hanging loosely beside him. But he had been watching that certain pair of eyes in the runway before the little group of men had scattered. And, by watching them, he had caught the signal. It was the merest flicker of the eye—a silent message from man to man. And Yonson had seen and understood. But the only movable thing about him was the little square of felt. And that was only at odd intervals when a gust of wind fanned through the doorway and sent the ugly thing flapping rapidly up and down.

II.

Bill Trotter had taken command of *The Rolling Dane* and had been accepted without a murmur of protest from the crew. At any rate, it looked that way. But Beezer Smith had other ideas in mind. And that night in the forecastle, after the men had had their fill of an enormous plum duff, Beezer made a bold attempt to set the wheels of dissatisfaction into motion for a different angle of events.

The overthrow of the lordships of the vessel had been far easier than had been expected. Cage, the mate, had been caught with his back turned, and one of the men—"Hump" Tucker, to be exact—had finished him on the spot with a capstan bar so easily and quickly that the ill-fated man went to his doom without knowledge of what had happened.

Yonson had been caught as he stepped from his cabin to the deck. Beezer Smith had been lying on the roof just over the doorway, and the lanky captain was felled with a belaying pin.

"An' what was it all about?" Smith grumbled in the semidarkness of the forecastle. "We pulled the trick—an' why? I ain't next to myself yet. Trotter made all kinds of promises, an' look at 'im now. He's gettin' all humped up dudelike, an' it's just what I 'spected. Didn't I say us blokes would be the fall guys when the monkey-lipped bum cooked this thing up? Ain't I been in mutiny jams before? An' are you plugs goin' to stand for his fat gaff?"

He broke off with a sneer.

"I ain't hankerin' fer another row," Hump Tucker answered. "I ain't seein' no good we've done fer ourselves, an' if the government mugs get their claws on me an' you, Beezer, the buzzards will pick our bones as we swing sorta peacefullike from a limb by the neck."

"You betcha life!" Smith agreed. "Trotter ain't done none o' the dirty work. He'd go to the pen, I 'spect. But that'd be all he'd get."

"Maybe we'd better give Bill a chanct," Toady Boggs suggested in a frail voice from one of the bunks behind them. "He said he'd shoot square, an' that he had a friend in Victoria that'd trust 'im with a cargo o' booze——".

"Aw, go on," Beezer cut in. "That's old, bloke. Nobody ain't doin' no trustin' in the booze game. We ain't got no jack, an' we can't sell this old cargo. Who'd buy it?"

"Nobody will!" Dizzy Jones horned in, his cross-eyes glinting in the semidarkness. "But, lis'en: We can dump the works an' hijack a booze runner."

"That's old stuff, Dizzy," Tucker answered. "All the plugs are talkin' about doin' that stunt. What'd we stop 'em with?"

"Why, there's two six-shooters an' three sawed-off shotguns aboard——"

"An' who's got 'em?" Beezer Smith growled. "How'd we get 'em away from Big Bill? Tell me that, will you? He's the high mogul, right now. But he ain't goin' to be all the time, savvy?"

There was a moment of silence. They were puzzled—all of them. Bill Trotter had failed to make good his promises. The ship had been taken, but the crew were still housed in the forecastle. Only Trotter and three of his most trusted henchmen, "Red" Morgan, "Raspberry" Hawkins, and "Blacky" Cunningham, walked the after deck of *The Rolling Dane*. But there was a good reason for it. Only a few knew why the mutiny had taken place—and Beezer Smith was not one of them.

"Hell," he grumbled, "you an' me's what I call the crackajacks o' this thing. What's Bill done, anyway?"

"He looked on while you birds pulled the trick," "Spider" Murphy put in from one of the top bunks.

"Yeah, by hell, that's all!"

"Oh, I know," Tucker's voice lifted. "But give Bill a chanct."

Hump Tucker had a faculty of trying to agree with every one at all times. None of them knew that he was Trotter's secret henchman of the forecastle.

"He didn't have no right to bust me," Smith

grumbled reflectively. "But he did—just to show off. Then he winds up by spreadin' on the taffy an' sends down his plum duff by old Wilson who couldn't boil water without burnin' it."

"No, he walloped you without a call," Dizzy Jones agreed.

Smith's face grew yellow. He turned upon the man with a snort of rage.

"Listen, bloke," he ground out, "I ain't lookin' for none o' your gas about it. Savvy? You're a handshaker. You was the first bloke to put the handle o' captain on that gink."

"But—but ain't I a pal?" Jones stammered. "Didn't I swipe the rods off'n the mate an' the Swede an' turn 'em over to you guys?"

Dizzy Jones was a downright coward at heart.

"Yeah, you did," Beezer rumbled. "You passed 'em over to Big Bill, too. An' who knows where they's gone from there? I ain't likin' you none too well, fellow."

"You fellows make me sick!"

The voice exploded from a dark corner in the starboard side of the forecastle. It came from a man with cold blue eyes and a great shock of dark-brown hair.

"You fellows cooked up this plot like a flock of scared rats," the voice went on. "Half of us didn't know that a thing was going to happen until you broke loose with your fireworks. Now, because all of you can't have your say, you whine your brains out and start hatching up trouble again.

"What's the use of hiding in here to do your snorting? Go up on deck and declare yourself to Trotter. He'll probably listen to your chatter for a while. Then he'll kick your face off. But you won't go. You'll sit here and howl your heads off. The whole blamed bunch of you are afraid of your shadows—and it hurts you because you know it.

"And you, Beezer Smith, you've been looking for trouble all along—ever since we weighed anchor. You're always ramming your nose into something, and you're always getting it punched. You got just what was coming to you this morning."

"Gee whiz!" Alex Duncan sputtered. "Why, 'Husky' Winters, you're blowin' like you ain't in on this little frolic. You're an educated plug. You ain't got no savvy about the world. Bill didn't have no right to smack Beezer."

"Naw, he didn't!" Smith flared up. "Any man what says so is a liar by the clock, savvy?"

"The hell he didn't!" the blue-eyed man in the corner whipped out. "I say he did, and I am taking the lie from no man like you, you walking weakling of humanity. Understand me? I'd smash you myself before I'd see you jump another man who's down and can't help himself or stand on his feet."

A snort of rage broke from the stumpy man with the beet-red nose.

"Oh, you would, you gas plug!"

"Yes, I would. I would put the finishing touches on the job, too."

Smith leaped to his feet, scowling. He was getting ready to fight.

"Listen, bloke, you got my drift. I said you was a liar by the clock. Now, what about it?"

He started for the dark corner, his fists clenched and his puffed lips contorting with rage.

"Get ready, jasper," he warned. "I'm a-comin'."

Something met him halfway—something hurtling out of the darkness.

Smith's horny fist plunged out. He had been something of a fighter in his day and knew quite a bit about the manly art of self-defense. But his fist failed to connect with the blurred shape in front of him. Instead, something hard landed under his chin like a battering ram.

The stumpy man turned a backward leap—and sat down hard. He lurched to his feet with a bellow, and he was knocked down again. This time, on his backward whirl, his head struck the lower rail of one of the bunks and he rolled over with a grunt and lay still, consciousness having been buffeted out of him by the blow of the fist from the front and the unexpected bump from behind.

"Gee whiz!" Duncan yelped. "Gee whiz!"

"Holy smoke!" another voice chirped in from one of the top bunks. "Ain't Beezer gittin' in a lot o' hard luck?"

"That's not half of it," the blue-eyed man informed them. "He'll get more of it as fast as he wants it."

"Boy! Oh, boy!" the sad voice of Toady Boggs put in almost painfully. "You hit 'im a hell of a lick, Husky."

Silence again fell over them until Beezer Smith began to show signs of life. He sat up and rubbed his bearded face. The whole world looked gloomy right at that moment. He felt terribly alone. Had both the Lord and man turned their backs upon him there in the eyes of the ship? It looked that way, and—to the surprise of the others—he broke out in a fit of gruff sobs.

"Gee whiz, Beezer, shut up!" Alex Duncan objected. "You make a noise like a bawlin' yearlin'."

"You let 'im 'lone, you pop-eyed farmer," Hump Tucker rumbled. "He's been through rough water all day."

It was Tucker's duty to keep peace, if he could.

"Well, gee whiz, can't a guy talk?"

"Not if he's a-peckin' on somebody," Tucker answered.

"Boy! Oh, boy, you hit 'im a——"

"Dry up, you frog-lookin' runt!"

"Listen to me, Hump Tucker," the blue-eyed man in the corner spoke up. "Nobody's going to take very much of your jaw, either. Understand me? If there's going to be a bully of this fo'c's'le, Husky Winters will be the bully. Understand that?"

Evidently the blue-eyed man was deliberately try-

ing to get himself into trouble. He was, but it was for reasons best known to himself.

"Is that so? Is that so?" Tucker rumbled. "Well, Husky, if you've got anything to say, spit it out. You know me. You know I'll push your face in."

First a low laugh answered him. Then came words—hot words that snapped with vitality, words that seemed to rise out of the oily gloom like distant cannon fire.

"Yes! You would be a dandy with a capstan bar. You would slip up behind and do your dirty work like you did to poor old Jim Cage, you white-livered coward."

"Now, say," Tucker tried to cut in. "Don't think——"

"Don't talk about thinking," Winters interrupted. "You couldn't think if you wanted to. It's not in you. Murder from behind is your hobby, and the hangman's noose will be your next port of call. Heaven must have been ashamed for your mother. But I'll bet if she had known the kind of numskull you would turn out to be, it's a ten-to-one shot that she'd have drowned you in a tub of vinegar."

He paused. Dizzy Jones grasped the opportunity to put in a few words.

"I'm a-thinkin' Husky's goin' to squawk," he mumbled. "Then the government plugs will be on our necks."

"Stool pigeon, that's what," said Tucker.

"That's all right, blokes," said Beezer Smith, taking a renewed interest in the quarrel. "Let 'im yap. We'll all get it from the same scaffold."

He spoke slowly and solemnly, as if pronouncing his own sentence before a crowded courtroom.

"Maybe I will, and maybe I won't," Winters shot back. "What is it to you fellows if I do? What would you do about it? Get together and try to murder me, I guess. That's the way of you good, loyal fighting men—hard-boiled birds from Gallopin' Flat, eh? You make me sick! I thought you were men. I find you a bunch of weak sisters, as dirty as they make them in morals and everything else that goes to make a man. Fight? Why, just look down in this corner like you wanted to start something and I'll swab up the fo'c's'le with the tops of your heads."

"Hump," Smith growled to Tucker, "we ain't goin' to stand that gaff, are we? What does this bloke think he is?"

"What do I think I am?" Husky Winters laughed harshly. "Why, I'm your chaperon, you flop-eared grumblers."

"Boy! Oh, boy," Toady Boggs' voice lifted out of the gloom. "Can't Husky shoot off his bazzoo? Gosh, he's got a sky pilot beat."

Hump Tucker wavered. He wanted time to think—time to talk to Big Bill Trotter. Husky Winters—almost a mystery man among them ever since he had come aboard in the Solomons—had openly invited trouble. He would get it. That was a certainty. But Tucker decided to smooth things over for the time.

"Aw, ferget it," he mumbled. "We're supposed to be friends—pals—an' we find we ain't. Somebody's allus lappin' the trimmin' off'n the gravy."

"Gee whiz! It shore looks that way."

"I told you to shut up, you pop-eyed farmer."

"Maybe you did, but I am the bully of this fo'c's'le," Winters cut in, still sparring for another brawl.

"Let 'em blow! Let 'em blow," Smith growled. "I'm the bloke what's got the howl comin', an' I'm the bloke what's hurt. But I'm hard—tough, see?"

"Aw, shake your mitts an' fergit it," Duncan suggested.

"Nothin' doin', bloke. I'm hard—all the——"

"Way from Gallopin' Flat, Noo Yawk," Winters finished. "I don't believe you ever saw New York. But stay hard. It'll do you good."

"I will, bloke. You've got yours a-comin' from Beezer Smith. Savvy?"

III.

During the night it rained—literally poured down. But dawn broke with almost a colorless sky and a lazy sea. Then came daybreak, long streaks of gray mounting heavenward from the indistinct lip of the eastern horizon; then came the sun, its rays lifting like a faraway flare of the northern lights, casting their image on the face of the sea as the red ball lifted into the sky.

Husky Winters was sitting on the edge of the forecastle scuttle. He saw nothing of the body of Jim Cage. It had been removed from the cabin roof during the night and lowered into the sea. Nor did he see anything of Captain Yonson for several minutes.

Toady Boggs was at the wheel, and Raspberry Hawkins was pacing up and down the starboard runway, puffing away at one of Yonson's good cigars. The absence of the others was Big Bill Trotter's idea—an idea of his own making about the handling of a ship at sea. He saw no necessity of scrubbing down the decks of an old tramp schooner every morning. Nor did the idea of keeping a certain number of men on watch in fair weather appeal to him. Naturally, Raspberry Hawkins, Blacky Cunningham and Red Morgan had readily agreed with him.

Hawkins strolled up the runway and caught sight of Winters.

"Up kinda early, ain't you? I mean early when you don't have to git up?" he inquired, cocking his blunt head to one side and giving the cigar an upward slant as he blew a whiff of smoke out of one side of his mouth.

"Yes," Winters answered, with a grin. "I like to get up early. I like to watch the sun come up."

"Kind o' stargazerlike, eh?"

"I guess so."

Hawkins started to move away. Then he paused, taking a big gold watch out of his pocket that Winters recognized as the property of Captain Olaf Yonson.

"Better take a turn at the wheel," Hawkins ordered, as he glanced at the watch's dial and snapped the lid closed. "Toady's done his trick. I guess you can stargaze from there, can't you?"

"Sure," Winters agreed. "I rather like my trick at the wheel."

"Like it?" Raspberry Hawkins removed the cigar from his mouth, spat contemptuously on the deck, and screwed his face to one side. "Say, you're a queer duck. A trick at the wheel means work, an' I ain't crazy about work. O' course, I does my bit. But I ain't hankerin' for it. Stargazer, eh? Well, I guess that's right. You look sorta freakish at that."

Winters laughed and went aft. As he relieved Toady Boggs at the wheel, he saw Olaf Yonson.

The former master of *The Rolling Dane* was ironed hard and fast with six feet of chain to the port rail near the stern. Evidently he had been there all night, for he was dripping wet from the rainstorm. He sat flat on the deck with his back resting against the lower woodwork of the rail. His one eye was almost closed, but the inevitable flapping of the black patch over his empty socket occurred with every little freakish change of the wind. A battered gray hat was on his head, curling down at the brim from the weight of the rainfall it had absorbed in the long hours of darkness and cold.

"Got the old man sewed up good and tight," Winters remarked to Hawkins. "Looks like he'll stay there, too."

"I'll say he will," Raspberry chuckled. "He knows who's who by now. We set 'im there so he'd have a chanct to see how real guys can run a ship."

"Oh," Winters grinned, "going to keep him there?"

"Nope. Goin' to house 'im down in the fo'c's'le this mornin' an' let the other jaspers have the run of the cabins. We're goin' to sail like brothers from now on. No more highbrow stuff, see? We'll be all hunky-dory."

"I see," Winters forced another grin.

Hawkins strolled forward and met Hump Tucker at the end of the runway.

They nodded.

"Did you get it?" Tucker demanded in a low tone.

"Naw," Hawkins growled. "He swears like a trooper he ain't savvyin' what we're talkin' about. But we know. An' he knows, too. He just ain't talkin' right now. That's all. Don't intend to kick through, see? But he will. Take a few more days an' he'll squawk his head off. But what about the other jaspers? Any o' them know what's up?"

"Nary a word," Tucker assured him. "They's wonderin' about it, though. They ain't savvyin' why we pulled the trick. Gettin' restlesslike, see? Better tell Bill to cook up somethin' to soothe 'em down—somethin' taffylike, you know."

Hawkins grinned.

"You bet," he answered. "Bill's goin' to give 'em a spiel that'll knock 'em silly. We cooked it up last night, an' they'll fall for it like a brick house."

Hump Tucker glanced about him.

"Say," he confided, "just keep your eye peeled on that jasper at the wheel—Winters, I mean. He's in for trouble. He's been a-blowin' his venom, an' he just knocked seven hundred dollars' worth o' face off'n Beezer last night."

Raspberry Hawkins screwed his face into a frown and listened while Tucker rambled on and on about the quarrel in the forecastle.

"He'd 'a' took a swipe at me, too," he wound up, "but I let 'im know that I was the wrong bird to fool with, an' he just kinda piked down a bit."

"We'll tend to him," Hawkins frowned. "But keep your eyes peeled on 'im. He's a mystery jasper. We don't know who he is. He ain't no sailorman, that's sure. But don't let 'im worry you none. We'll fix his clock along with the Swede's when the time comes. But, about Beezer—still grumbling, I reckon?"

"Yeah, he's a-howlin' his head off 'cause Bill batted 'im one. That was a downright fool trick, I thinks, myself. Don't you?"

"Yes, it was," Hawkins agreed. "Bill was a little nervous, I guess. But he sees where he's wrong, an' he'll patch it up some way. Leave it to that guy. He'll make 'em think he's a regular Christmas tree come to stay."

"Maybe. But whatcha goin' to do with the Swede?"

Raspberrry grinned.

"We're goin' to dump 'im down in the fo'c's'le an' keep a good eye peeled on 'im."

"Good idea," Tucker agreed. "Have you plugs shook 'im down?"

"Shook 'im down!" Hawkins repeated. "Say, we made the old jasper strip off as clean as he was the day he hit the world."

"An' found nothin'?"

"Nothin'—nary a thing like 'em," Hawkins grumbled. "An' that wasn't all. We shook the cabins down, opened up the mattresses an' gouged about everywhere. But it ain't no use. We've got to make 'im talk—just *got* to make 'im talk!"

Hump Tucker was thoughtful for several moments.

"Listen to me," he exclaimed. "I got a scheme—a corker!"

"Name it, old hoss."

"You an' Bill an' Red take the fall outa that bird at the wheel. Beat 'im up good an' proper. Then dump 'im down in the fo'c's'le with the old man an' lock 'em up. Then I'll plant myself down in the hold, right up close to the fo'c's'le bulkhead, an' we'll lis'en to the chatter they'll spring.

"Why, that jasper back there," Tucker waved his hand toward the wheel, "has been a-talkin' about squawkin' already."

Raspberry Hawkins was silent for several moments. Then his piggish eyes fairly gleamed.

"Why, Hump," he whirled upon the other, "you're a regular highbrow plug! You're a genius. You ought to paint pictures or sell weenies at a country fair. Man, you're a wonder!"

Hump Tucker actually blushed. He shifted from one foot to the other, and grinned, the smile spreading from ear to ear.

"Well, 'tween me an' you, Ras," he confided, "I ain't been a sailorman all my life. My folks was educated plugs—wise jaspers, see? So'm I, but I ain't a-crowin' about it. I takes a man for what he is. Savvy?"

"Uh-huh," Hawkins droned. "My old man was quite a jasper himself. But I didn't have no hankerin' for claw-hammer coat tails an' a bunch o' swell mollies. We had a bunch o' highbrow flunkeys runnin' about the house in knee pants an' gold-braided coats. An' all kinds o' swell dames used to try to swing on my gate, but nothin' doin'. I turned 'em down, sorta coldlike. See? I didn't hanker for the sob stuff. Didn't like it at all! Get me?"

"Yeah, Ras."

"Now, there was a little red-headed hasher in a railroad beanery that got a case on me," Hawkins went on. "But I turned her down flat. Quick. See? No long-haired lollipop's goin' to catch your Uncle Felix T. Hawkins. But, Hump, that gal went plumb batty 'bout me. She sobbed all over Butte, Montana, tried to run off with me an' her old man's car an' leave the four kids behind——"

"I'll bet she was some bird if she fell for the likes of you," Blacky Cunningham cut in from behind. "I've been hearin' about that skillet wiper every day for weeks. Some sobbin' dame, I'll bet."

Raspberry Hawkins' face turned as red as his hair that had given him the name he carried among the crew.

"Aw, forgit it," Tucker grinned. "We was just jokin' a bit."

Blacky Cunningham laughed. He was tall, half negroid with a flat nose and sparse, kinky hair.

"Don't kid me, fellahs. I've been hearin' you all along."

Men began coming up from the forecastle; first Beezer Smith, then the others, interrupting further conversation. Tucker strolled away. He did not want to appear too intimate with the new lords of the vessel.

"I'll take my place any time," he made the pretense of growling over his shoulder. "I ain't needin' no jackin' up about it."

Raspberry Hawkins caught his meaning—his meaning to throw the others off their guard of suspicion—and took it up.

"That's all we want, jasper," he growled back. "Everybody's goin' to be the same from now on. See? But everybody's goin' to do his trick, too. See? There ain't no pets on this old hooker."

"You bet there ain't," Cunningham put in.

They glanced at Beezer Smith, and the scowler glared back at them—just scowling, his little eyes half closed, his cap pulled down tight, and his thick lips parted in a sneer.

Cunningham spoke to Hawkins in a low tone as they sauntered down the runway.

"Good idea—if that bulkhead ain't too thick, eh?"

"You savvy the drift, then?"

"Sure. Think I was standin' there behind you asleep, fellah?"

And it was planned without the knowledge of either Yonson or Winters. But it was not carried out at once. Big Bill waited the opportunity of an excuse to throw the two men together, and this was after the bulkhead in the forecastle was inspected from one end to the other by Hump Tucker.

He made his report to Raspberry Hawkins as they met at midday in the starboard runway, out of earshot of the other members of the crew.

"She'll work," he mumbled. "Got a lot o' little cracks."

"Fine! Bill's goin' to start the ball to rollin' right soon, now," the other man replied, speaking slowly and solemnly as he pronounced the sentence on the unsuspecting Husky Winters.

IV.

In the middle of the afternoon, the members of the crew were herded about the forward hatch cover by Trotter's close confederates of the after deck. Husky Winters was among them, silent and wondering.

Big Bill Trotter mounted the poop. Raspberry Hawkins, Red Morgan, and Blacky Cunningham gathered close behind Winters—and waited.

"Boys, brothers of toil," Trotter began in the droning voice of a stump speaker. "Fate has thrown us together on a wide, sad ocean to fight side by side, for a common cause. And that cause is freedom—freedom from the galling harness the rich have saddled upon the backs of the poor workingman. And we have fought and won!"

He spoke slowly, but his words boomed. Into his face came a snarl as he went on and on with words falling from his lips like water. An hour

went by. Once his eyes actually streamed with tears. He was a born speaker of radical argument—and the men before him were born listeners to it. He painted pictures with an artist's skill, and at the close of his lecture, half of the men from the forecastle would have followed him to the jumping-off place.

"And, now, boys," he wound up, "you've been wondering where this little brawl is going to take up. You couldn't see where we'd make any money by taking the ship. But I'm going to tell you. We're going to turn this old hooker into a first-class rum runner. Get me? I've got a pal up in Canada that'll push out the coin for the first run——"

And on went the lecture. Big Bill painted his pictures just as well as he had painted them before. He had his audience keyed up for anything. But his word pictures failed to impress Beezer Smith.

"Now, boys," Trotter went on, confident of himself, "we've got a painful thing to do. We've got to try one of our mates. Step forward, Husky Winters."

It came like a boomerang. Winters looked up, surprised.

"What's the idea?" he demanded.

"The idea's this"—Trotter's eyes narrowed—"you've been blowin' your horn a little too loud an' long in the fo'c's'le. You've been tryin' to be the bully of this old hooker. See? And get me when I tell you there'll be no bully among *my* boys on this ship."

All his appearance of benevolence had vanished. He had stepped out of the pictures he had so gloriously painted for himself—and, again, he was Big Bill Trotter, bucko master of *The Rolling Dane*.

"Hump Tucker," he turned to the man, "step up here and tell us about the row in the fo'c's'le last night."

Tucker mounted the hatch cover and had his say. Others were called. The evidence piled high against Husky Winters. Then Beezer Smith was called.

"I ain't sayin'," was his answer to Trotter's questions. "I'm hard, I am. I ain't squawkin' when a bloke raps me. I'm the guy he's got to settle with, savvy? An' I ain't needin' none of your jackass courts to settle my 'fairs, savvy?"

Trotter just looked at him, his face darkening and lips pale. Then he turned to the crowd.

"Well, boys," he began removing his cap and coat, "I guess it's up to me to give this bird"—he nodded toward Winters—"a lickin' an' learn him where he belongs. What's the word, fellows?"

Men began to grin. It was going to be a show.

"Boy! Oh, boy!" Toady Boggs chirped, expectantly.

"Husky Winters, you're in fer a cleanin'," Dizzy Jones grinned.

There was nothing else to do. Husky Winters removed his coat and cap. He was doomed to be hammered into unconsciousness. If Bill Trotter failed, there were others to stand behind his back.

"Boy! Oh, boy! Won't it be fun?" cried Toady Boggs. "Boy! Oh, boy——"

Toady Boggs was suddenly stunned—Husky Winters had knocked him down.

"Boy! Oh, boy," the little man's voice pealed as he floundered on the deck.

Winters leaped to the center of the hatch cover.

"Just a minute, now," he held up his hand. "Listen—all of you! I'm in for a lacing. Trotter can't do it. But he's got help. If you guys will see that they come one at a time, I'll give you a real show by licking them all. Understand? I'll lick them all, one by one——"

"Oh, you will!" Trotter snorted.

They went at it, "teeth and toenail," as it was afterwards described. Because of his unexpected attack, Trotter drove the first blow home, and Winters was hurled to the hatch cover. But he was on his feet in a flash, sparring.

Trotter stepped in. Winters dived low. The fist aimed for his face passed over the top of his head, and Trotter bellowed with pain as something remarkably hard struck him in the flabby portion of his stomach. As he reeled backward, another fist crashed against his right jaw. He was down on his back before he knew it, his face cut wide open and bleeding.

"Boy! Oh, boy!" Toady Boggs sat up and wailed.

And Trotter came up from the hatch cover, roaring with anger. He had ceased fighting and had started clawing at his opponent.

They surged off the hatch cover and, fighting every inch of the way, blundered into the port runway.

Yonson saw them and yelled. He could not help it.

"Come on, kid! Come on, boy!"

Trotter's nose was broken. His face ran sickly red in the light of the sun. One eye was gone—closed up tight and looking like a splotch of badly bruised beef. He was getting the worst of it. Down he went! Up flew that infernal deck to meet the back of his head. Up and down! Up and down! He had lost track of the number of times.

"Boy! Oh, boy!" Toady yelped. "Watch 'em go! Watch 'em go! Husky Winters, I believe you've broke my neck."

Winters had no time to listen to the little man's wails. He was busy knocking Big Bill Trotter up and down the runway as fast as the man could blunder to his feet.

"Get 'im, you fools!" Trotter snarled—and sprawled on that infernal deck again. "Don't stand there like—like—rummies!"

"Ain't fair! Ain't fair!" somebody yelled.

But Raspberry Hawkins, Blacky Cunningham, and Red Morgan were already mixed into the fight.

Yonson took stock of it with a groan.

"Hell! Oh, hell!" he yelled. "Why ain't I loose? Why ain't I loose?"

He resembled an overgrown greyhound straining against his chain. The one gray eye was ablaze. The black patch flapped. A sudden gust of wind whipped the brim of the old hat back and flattened it against the crown. Olaf Yonson was seeing red—and fighting mad!

"Hell! Oh, hell!" he snorted, his voice rumbling up the runway. "A black man beating a white man, and white men looking on. Stop it! You're killing him!"

But the fight went on with the odds heavily against Husky Winters.

A short, jabbing blow caught Red Morgan on the point of the chin. Another landed below his cheek. He went down, rolled over and lay still. The whole flabby portion of flesh on his jaw had been knocked loose. Then down went Winters from a blow on the back of the neck from the big negro. He came up, dizzy and reeling, and drove a left hook into the pit of Blacky Cunningham's stomach—and the negro was down and out of the fight.

"Come on, kid!" Yonson bellowed. "Boy, you're a fighting fool!"

But Raspberry Hawkins remained—and he was at Winters' back. He jerked a short blackjack from his hip pocket and brought it down on the young man's head from behind.

The whole world seemed to reel and swim. Husky Winters' hands dropped to his sides. His face paled. His knees weakened and bent. And down came that blackjack again, sounding like the dull toll of some enormous gong in the far distance. Then, as he fell, Big Bill Trotter was on his feet and upon him, almost blinded and clawing like a mad beast.

"I'm gonna kill 'im!" he bawled.

It was easy then. All resistance on the part of Husky Winters had ceased. He slipped slowly toward the deck, his face pale and his mouth hanging open, and suddenly lurched forward as Raspberry Hawkins' heavy boot struck him in the center of the back with all the force of the man's weight behind it.

"Oh, you miserable cowards!" Yonson yelled, straining on his six-feet length of chain and his one eye gleaming savagely.

But that was not the end of it. There were more and more kicks. They lasted until long after Husky Winters had drifted into the dark depths of unconsciousness and lay helplessly on the deck.

"Murder!" shouted Yonson. "Somebody stop 'em! You fools! A dog wouldn't stand for that. Hell!"

"Boy! Oh, boy," wailed Toady Boggs. "They're killin' Husky!"

Trotter whirled upon the group like a madman.

"Yes! I'm goin' to kill 'im," he snarled. "He's gonna die right here. Get me? Gonna die right here!"

Hump Tucker grinned, expectantly.

"I'm gonna blow his brains out!"

Trotter's right hand flew back to his hip pocket. Then he glared about him, looking over the deck. In the shuffle, he had lost his six-shooter. But he saw it, and as he saw it, Beezer Smith saw it also. It was lying right at Beezer's feet.

Smith reached down and swooped the revolver from the deck.

"Now! By heavens! It's my turn!"

The words were spat from his mouth. He leaped away from the crowd, that inevitable scowl flooding his face.

"Gimme that gat, Beez."

It was Trotter's voice. But somehow it lacked weight.

"You go t' hell, bloke. It's my turn, now!"

An explosion followed—a sudden shaft of fire and blue smoke that rapidly cleared away. Then another explosion, and another shaft of fire and blue smoke—and Big Bill Trotter, bucko master of *The Rolling Dane,* halted in his tracks, flinching. His hands went to his abdomen, clutching it tight. He reeled and gagged as if suddenly nauseated. His eyes rolled. His jaw grew limp and his mouth sagged open. He staggered backward for a few steps, the strength of his legs leaving them, and collided with the wall of the cabin. Then he lurched sidewise and fell headlong into the port scuttle.

"Oh, boy! Oh, boy," Boggs squealed. "He's a *goner!*"

He was. The rest of them knew it. Even Hump Tucker had ceased to grin.

Blacky Cunningham's head lifted from the deck. Then it fell back with a bump. Beezer Smith—scowling little Beezer Smith—had shot him squarely between the eyes with a .44.

"I'm hard, I am. Tough, see?" The words came like a sob. His face was pale—deathly white. But the hand that held the revolver never shifted an inch.

Three more cartridges were left in the scowler's six-shooter, and the rest of the gang knew it. They had counted the shots.

Raspberry Hawkins was leaning against the rail. He looked sick and tired. He was wondering who would be next to go.

"I could kill all you plugs an' never bat an eye." Smith's voice lifted with the coldest simplicity.

"I'd sorta like to do the trick, too," he added. "I'm hard, I am!"

He was still pale, his face looking ghastly. The only thing that retained its natural hue about him

was the beetlike nose. And it was drawn down until it resembled the great beak of some strange vulture. His eyes were dull and lusterless. It seemed that he did not even breathe, he stood so still and lifeless.

He twisted the revolver toward the crowd.

"Git busy, blokes," he ordered. "Pick that darky up an' dump 'im over. Jump! Damn you!"

Blacky Cunningham went over the side with a splash.

"Now, Trotter's next," he went on. "Grab 'im, you plugs. He ain't goin' to bite nobody, now. Grab 'im!"

Trotter was lifted upon the rail. Nervous eyes glanced back at Beezer Smith, the man with the six-shooter that did not waver a fraction of an inch.

"Stop!" he called out. "Shake 'im down—see what he's got on 'im. I'm sorta curious about that bloke."

Yonson was watching them—just wondering what would happen next.

"A plug o' chewin' tobacco, a dollar Mex, an' a brass watch. That's all, Beezer," Dizzy Jones called out after a thorough inspection of the dead man's pickets. "Want 'em?"

"Put 'em back," Smith ordered, still calm and pale.

The property was returned to its silent owner.

"All right. Dump 'im. Shove 'im in, I say!"

Trotter's body, still limp with human warmth, was pushed over the rail. It struck the water head-first and with hardly a splash.

Smith turned to Hawkins.

"Ras, who's got the other gat?" he demanded.

"Why—well——"

"Just a minute, now, you yellow bloke," Smith cut him off. "If you lie to me, off comes the top o' your head. Savvy? Now, who's got that gat?"

Hawkins swallowed hard.

"Why, I have, Beezer," he answered, floundering with his speech.

"Just a minute, bloke. I'm Mr. Smith, savvy? Captain Smith. Get it, Ras? Who's got the gat?"

"I have it, cap'n——"

"Captain," Smith corrected stiffly.

"I have it, Captain Smith."

"Where is it, bloke?"

"In my hip pocket."

"Sir! Damn you!"

"Yes, sir!" Felix T. Hawkins replied with a jerk.

"That's better," Smith informed him. "Now, back up to me. Remember, bloke, I'm just cryin' to kill you, an' if you get funny, off comes the top o' your red head. Do you savvy me drift?"

"Yes, sir, *Captain Smith.* I—I ain't lookin' for trouble—*sir.*"

Raspberry Hawkins lifted his hands, turned and backed up to the man. The revolver that was stolen from Yonson and Jim Cage was transferred from his pocket to Captain Beezer Smith, the new master of *The Rolling Dane.*

"Now, all you goofs," Smith turned to the crowd. "Get here an' swab up this deck. Get me?"

"Aye, aye, *sir,*" a blubber of deep grunts arose.

Beezer Smith meant business. That .44 was a great persuader. It was an ugly thing of destruction that stood for no resistance. Promotions ran with sudden outbursts of speed aboard *The Rolling Dane.* And Beezer Smith had promoted—himself.

"An' you, Ras Hawkins," Smith turned to the man, "I've a little talkin' to do with you. I guess you ain't knowin' that I was a-hidin' under the fo'c's'le slide when you jaspers was a-shootin' off your bazzoo all by your lonesome this mornin'. You savvy, I reckon. Know I'm in on the deal, too, I reckon."

"Why, yes. I mean *yes, sir.* Glad you're in on it—*sir.*"

"Oh, you are, bloke?" Smith sneered. "Damn nice o' you, ain't it?"

Raspberry Hawkins made no answer. He merely shifted from one foot to the other and paled. One could expect anything from that .44 in Beezer's unwavering hand.

"Now, you plugs," Smith turned to the others, "shift Winters down in the fo'c'c'le. We're makin' a little change o' the scenery. Ras, you can take the Swede down, an' I hope he knocks your top gear loose.

"Captain Smith's a-talkin', you plugs!"

"Yes, *sir, Captain Smith.*"

They knew it.

V.

There were days of throbbing pains and a high fever down in the forecastle where Captain Yonson and Husky Winters were confined after the remainder of the crew were housed in the cabins aft. Winters had been pounded and kicked until there was but little life left in his body. But Yonson nursed him back to life as a father would a son.

First came the gradual return to consciousness. Then came the reaction—fever! They had four days of it—raving days and endless nights while Yonson stood watch over his charge, pouring water down the young man's parched throat and standing by like a faithful old greyhound.

And there were Husky Winters' strange sayings.

"Out of the North. Down across the Bering Sea," he would mutter. "Then weeks and weeks to the Molucca Pass, the Banda Sea, the Arafura, through the Torres, and on to New Caledonia; then up to New Georgia, all the way with fighting men and fighting weather for thirty months."

Then would come the laugh—that inevitable, loud and mocking laugh that always followed—as Husky Winters rolled and tossed upon his hard bunk, "a

hunk of beat-up, human beef," Yonson afterward described him.

"Fighting men and fighting weather," Yonson mused, eying the sick man with a peculiar stare. "Kid, you've had your share. But I'm with you."

He studied the face. Regardless of its bruises, it was a familiar one. The forehead was high and broad, and the nose a trifle large, but well drawn. Somewhere, Yonson had seen a face that resembled it, but for the life of him he could not remember where or to whom it belonged.

"Fighting men and fighting weather," Winters droned. "Dad, you sure cut out a hot trail for me."

"You bet he did," Yonson soothed.

He had not the slightest idea in the world of what he was talking about, but he wanted to humor him. Sometimes it helped in fever cases. He did not know that Hump Tucker was lying just on the other side of the forecastle bulkhead with his ear cocked against one of the cracks, no more than six or eight feet away.

Winters went on mumbling.

"Fighting men and fighting weather," he repeated. "Dad, you're certainly long on your description."

He paused, laughing again.

Yonson sat up with a jerk. He leaned over the young man, examining the battered features carefully, first from one side of the bunk, then from the other.

"Kid, I've got your number at last!" he exclaimed. "Why, Lord! You're old man Phillip Hornsby's kid. You're Arthur Hornsby—'Art,' they called you when you was a kid. Why, you've been aboard my ship a hundred times before you went away to that school back East.

"Out to learn the business from the water up," he rattled on. "I'll bet that's it. That's old man Phil's way of doing things. And that saying you've got! Why, I haven't been in the old home port in twenty years without old Phil trotting up the gangplank with a grin on his face to say: 'Hello, you lady-killing Swede. How was the passage? All the way with fighting men and fighting weather, eh?'

"Boy, I must be getting old. I thought I knew that face of yours the minute you trotted aboard and wanted to ship with me."

He broke off, pacing up and down the forecastle, his one eye glittering and a grin upon his face as he rubbed his hands excitedly.

He did not know that the watch on the other side of the bulkhead had changed—that Red Morgan had taken Hump Tucker's place. Nor did he know that Hump Tucker was hurrying out of the hold with news for Beezer Smith, the new master of *The Rolling Dane*, who was sitting in the captain's cabin with a six-shooter on each hip, smoking a fifteen-cent cigar from the humidor, and enjoying the soul-inspiring hilarity from a bottle of Yonson's seasoned Scotch.

"Holy mackerel!" Tucker exploded, out of breath and panting. "Elijah has come a-visitin' in a little red wagon with golden wheels!"

Beezer Smith removed the cigar from his mouth and rested his right hand upon the polished butt of one of the six-shooters. He trusted no man. He had already dumped the sawed-off shotguns over the rail.

"Well," he growled with an air of importance, "trot him in an' tell the gent to have a chair. What's all the bazzoo about? Ain't you got no manners? You're liable to get smoked up when you come a-ramblin' in here like that."

"Listen!" Tucker exploded. "Husky Winters ain't Husky Winters a-tall. He's Arthur Hornsby—old Phil Hornsby's son. Get the drift, Beezer?"

Beezer Smith sat up as though he had been prodded with a pin.

"Bloke, are you gassin' me?"

"No! Honest, I ain't, Beez."

He rambled on, telling of the things he had overheard in the forecastle, and Smith listened eagerly, his little eyes flaming with interest.

"Bloke," Beezer grinned as the man finished, "that means a whoopin' wad o' jack——"

"Oh, man, I'll say so!"

"Old man Phillip Hornsby owns this blasted hooker," Smith went on. "He owns gas hookers an' four or five oil-burnin' tail twisters, too. He'll pay a whoppin' wad of kale to get that plug back under his old lady's eye. Hump, he's goin' to pass out the coin!"

He broke off with a grin.

"You betcha," Tucker agreed.

Smith poured himself another drink, a larger one this time. But he wasted none of it by passing the bottle to the other man.

"Now, bloke," he grumbled, gulping down the Scotch, "what about this other junk? Are you sure you wasn't batty in the top gear when you saw that jasper pass 'em over to the Swede?"

"Course I wasn't," Tucker replied excitedly. "Why, Beeze, I hadn't had a drink when I saw 'em change mits. I was right by the winder, hidin' in the dark, when the buyer slips 'em over to the old man."

"An' you ain't rememberin' how many?"

"Cripes, no!" Tucker exclaimed. "But it's a lot. That's sure. There was big an' little ones—a lot, I tell you. An' Yonson brought 'em away with him in a sack in his hip pocket. I ain't foolin', Beez. I followed 'im all the way back to ship."

"Well, listen," Smith leaned forward and poured himself another drink. The world was beginning to look rosy. "I'm goin' to make my wad on this trip. See? I'm goin' to git all rich. Goin' t' git

myself a swell layout o' duds an' a swell molly, too, see? Goin' to be a dude."

"I getcha, Beezer. Me an' you'll sally right along with the highbrow gals an' the plug-hatted jaspers. You see, I ain't like the other plugs. I'm a' educated Ike, that's what. Know all the high-steppin' stuff. Wise! I'll pilot you around, an' all you'll have to do is watch your Uncle Humph. See?"

"Yeah, I see," Smith informed him.

"I'm a' educated plug—wise Ike. Course you're wise to that?"

"Yeah, I am," answered Beezer, just looking at him with his beady eyes and sizing him up from head to toe.

He poured himself another drink.

"We'll chase round with all them plugs—just naturallike. See? I know the drift. Leave it to me, guy. You know I'm square. Never tried to highbrow you, has I, Beeze?"

"Highbrow? *Me?*"

"Yeah! You catch the lingo. Lot o' educated stiffs like me tries to do that. But I'm square—just a regular plug. Education ain't hurt me none."

"It shore as hell ain't," Beezer agreed.

"Course not. But, seein' you an' me's pals, how about a little shot o' that junk you're lappin' up?"

He nodded toward the bottle of Scotch.

"Ain't nothin' doin', bloke."

"Why, Beezer," he ground out the words and swallowed hard, "you ain't tryin' to highbrow me? *Me?* I ain't never done you like that, an' I'm a' educated plug, too. Got all kinds o' savvy about claw-hammer coat tails an' swell feeds, an' flashy dames. Why, when we jump outa this, we'll have all kinds o' swell mollies a-trailin' after us. I savvy 'em. Now, up in Montana one time——"

"Say, bloke, shut up," Smith cut in. "You're goin' to spring Ras Hawkins' yarn. You plumb forgot that I was a-listenin' to you birds talk. An' listen some more, plug: As far as highbrow stuff, you ain't got the brains of a Mexican mule. You ain't got the savvy o' straight up from straight down, you flop-eared, farmer-lookin' bum. Why, you ain't got the savvy o' talkin' to a guy."

He paused and took another drink. Captain Yonson certainly knew how to buy good Scotch—and those cigars were excellent.

"Why, Beezer, is that the way you feel?" Hump Tucker looked like he was going to cry.

Smith downed his drink with a gulp and a smack of the lips that caused the other man to swallow hard.

"You betcha life, Hump! You heard me. An', listen some more, Mr. Plug"—he turned upon the man with a scowl—"I'm goin' to show you some education—or I'm goin' to smoke you full o' holes. Savvy?"

"Why, Beezer, you an' me's pals."

"No, we ain't! Shut up!" Smith bellowed. "Get on your pins. Now, turn around. Hike out that door. Now, stop, you flop-eared monkey. Turn around again. Now, walk in here—an' take your lid off as you come. See?"

Tucker hesitated, bewildered and nervous. Beezer Smith jerked a six-shooter out of his pocket, bringing the muzzle up to the level of the man's stomach.

"Start!" he ordered.

Hump Tucker came forward, shivering with fear and wondering what it was all about. Had Beezer Smith gone crazy? He thought so.

"Now," Smith exploded, "say 'Captain Smith, I'd like to gas a little with you, sir.' Say it!"

"Captain Smith, I'd—I'd like to gas with you a little, *sir.*"

"Ain't nothin' doin', you mush-faced bum!" Smith thundered. "Git t' hell outa here. Git!"

"Yes, *sir,* Captain Smith, *sir,*" Tucker stammered, shuffling out on the deck with his eyes fastened on the muzzle of the .44 and his lips trembling.

He was glad to get away from there.

"I guess that's education, plug," Smith called after him. He would show them who was boss of *The Rolling Dane.* He had, he reckoned. It looked that way, too.

"Now, for them jaspers in the fo'c's'le," he grinned as he downed another drink of that most excellent Scotch and applied a match to a fresh cigar.

VI.

Olaf Yonson's charge suddenly showed signs of returning consciousness. His eyelids fluttered open. He yawned lazily and gazed up at Yonson for several moments as if trying to recall that freckled face, its one eye and ponderous mustache to memory.

Yonson waited for him to speak.

"Yonson?" the man muttered. "Oh, yes, Captain Yonson! I know you, now. Funny. Couldn't hardly place you at first, though. I feel a little dizzy. Got a bad taste in my mouth, too." He made an effort to smile.

"You're coming out of it," Yonson grinned. "In fact, you've been out of it several times, but you take sudden notions to go back into it, Art."

"Art?" the man repeated. "Then, you know who I am?"

"You bet," Yonson chuckled. "Why, kid, I should have known you from the beginning. But it's been years since you went away to school."

Arthur Hornsby—alias Husky Winters—moved his head to nod.

"But how did you find out?" he asked.

Yonson sat down on the edge of the bunk and explained. "So, you see," he wound up, "that saying of your dad's is something a man could never forget—fighting men and fighting weather! Plain as the nose on your face, wasn't it?"

"I guess so, Hornsby answered. "How long have I been unconscious?"

"This is the fourth day," Yonson informed him.

"The fourth day!" Hornsby attempted to whistle. "Why, man, I feel like I had been sick a month."

"I know. I thought you were a *goner* for a time."

They were silent for several moments. Arthur Hornsby attempted to sit up on the edge of the bunk, but Yonson would have none of it.

"You take it easy," he ordered. "About to-morrow you'll be able to hop about a little. But just keep a stiff upper lip and lay still. It'll pay in the long run. Heaven only knows what we're up against."

"I guess you're right, captain," Hornsby grinned. "Gosh! I feel like I had been run through a sausage machine. Those fellows must have given me a whale of a licking."

"They did," Yonson assured him. "And I couldn't do a thing but stand and look on while they went after you. But you showed them a trick or two. Golly! You knocked 'em down going and coming, right and left. Trotter's face looked like a last year's strawberry that a mule had stepped on. But he got his. Beezer Smith just ruined him."

"What do you mean? I lost all interest in the fight along at the last, you know."

"Oh, yes, of course you did," Yonson exclaimed. "Beezer Smith shot him through and through with that big .44 of mine."

He went on, explaining the fight, how it ended with the death of Big Bill Trotter and Blacky Cunningham.

"And, then," he wound up, "Beezer made them dump the two of them overboard, and afterwards capped the thing off by telling them who was who here."

"I don't remember it," Hornsby said reflectively. "I only remember that you were yelling something from the other end of the runway, and that I was going strong until something crashed down on the back of my head. After that, things grew a bit muddy with my thinking apparatus."

"Small wonder that it did," Yonson assured him. "You were hit several times after that—and you were kicked something awful, Heaven only knows how many times. Your ribs must be made out of rubber."

"They feel crushed into bits."

"But they're not," Yonson grinned. "I've looked you over pretty carefully, and I find nothing broke, and nothing gone. But, boy, you're certainly bruised from head to heel. It's a wonder that you're still living. Why didn't you slip me the news that they were going to pull this mutiny before they jumped poor old Jim Cage?"

"I knew nothing about it," Hornsby answered. "It was cooked up without my knowledge. Only a few of the others in the fo'c's'le knew about it. Only a certain number knew that it was going to happen until it was all over with. That was Trotter's plan, I believe. But there's something behind all of it besides just storming the ship to get command of her. If the cargo was intoxicating liquors, I would figure that that was the cause. But it's not. So what is it?"

Yonson was thoughtful for a minute. He glanced about and at the closed slide of the scuttle overhead.

"Yes, there's a mighty good reason," he confided in a low tone. "But they'll never get any richer from me if I can help it—not if they tie me up by the thumbs and lick me every twenty-four hours."

"What do you mean? Or don't you want to tell me?" Hornsby demanded.

"I mean pearls," Yonson answered with the utmost simplicity. "'German Charley's' pearls. Ever hear of German Charley?"

Hornsby's eyes widened. He nodded.

"Yes," he said, "I heard of German Charley as I was going through the Torres Straits on the old *Corte Madera*. He's an old hermit, I understand, who lives on one of those dinky little islands in the Straits. But I never took much stock in the story that he was immensely wealthy in pearls. It sounded like one of those Thursday Island yarns to me. You know they have some corking tales—I mean the natives have."

"Oh, I know all about Thursday Islanders," Yonson assured him. "But in this case, it happens to be true. Charley's been collecting pearls for the past twenty years. He has sold a few but held on to his better ones until old Doctor Bunt managed to buy them from him at a high figure. Do you remember Bunt?"

Hornsby nodded.

"Little fellow, wasn't he—all hair and no teeth? Came aboard just before we sailed from the Solomons?"

"That's him. Peculiar-looking duck," Yonson answered. "But he bought those pearls and turned them over to me to deliver to a certain jewelry firm in San Francisco. And, by some hook or crook, some one aboard knew that I had them in my possession. And that's the real reason for all the rough stuff. See through it?"

Hornsby nodded again. He was beginning to understand. But he did not know that Beezer Smith had fixed a price upon his head—a price of ransom that was almost double the value of German Charley's thirty-thousand-dollar collection of rare pearls.

"But they'll never get them," Yonson went on. "I'll die and be dumped overboard before them crooks can have them."

"Don't be foolish," Hornsby warned. "If they get them, dad will pay the bill without a word. He's a good sport. So if it comes to a show-down,

give them the cursed things. Thirty thousand is no great figure for dad."

Yonson shook his head grimly.

"Never, my boy, never," he smiled. "If I gave them those things right now I'd be a dead man within an hour."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, they'd have nothing to hold me for, then," Yonson explained. "So they'd just get rid of me in the quickest way possible. Maybe you'd go, too. They're a hard case, and don't you forget it."

"I believe I realize it," Hornsby answered, with a painful grin crossing his face. "Murder doesn't mean much to those fellows. They can do it on an empty stomach every morning before breakfast and never turn a hair. But I am a little worried about those pearls."

The grim smile again registered itself in Yonson's face.

"Don't let it bother you," he answered. "Why, they've romped all over them as it is. But tell me something to relieve my curiosity: They say you started the trouble you got in. Why'd you do it?"

"Oh, I just wanted to do something to get on the outs with the fo'c's'le bunch," the young man explained. "I knew that they were not in very good standing with Trotter and his three pals. So if I had been able to stir up a row and had won Trotter's favor, I might have worked my way aft."

"Then what?"

"Well, if I could have managed to get one of those six-shooters or one of the shotguns, you see, we might have been able to change the run of things a little. But I guess I blundered on my scheme. At any rate, it didn't work. I received the worst of it."

Yonson was thoughtful for a time.

"Boy, you're game," he exclaimed. "Why, if I had those six-shooters that Smith's packing about, I'd be running this blooming ship within an hour. We'd just herd the bunch down here and pull them out when we needed a man for something. And we could shackle the helmsman to his post with a chain, and—and lock the other up good and tight.

"But, then," he wound up slowly, "we haven't got those revolvers."

"Then you don't think my idea was so bad after all?"

"No! By golly, no. But it didn't work."

Again they dropped into silence, each busy with his own thoughts, until Yonson spoke.

"Say, tell me why you're romping about as a common seaman? I've got all the rest of it clear."

"That was just dad's idea——"

"Just so!" Yonson interrupted. "I knew it. Wanted you to get a little first-handed knowledge of the shipping game, didn't he?"

"You've guessed it."

"Oh, no, I didn't," the man parried. "I just knew it because was it was like old Phil to figure up something like that. He went to sea, himself, you know."

"Yes, at fourteen, I've heard him say."

The forecastle slide was thrown roughly back, bringing an end to the conversation. The muzzle of a six-shooter appeared in the square of light. Then came Beezer Smith as he descended into the narrow quarters, the inevitable scowl upon his face looking uglier than ever because of his many cups of Captain Yonson's Scotch.

"All right, you plugs, stand way back an' gimme lots o' room, an' do it quick, see?" he ordered, his face swathed in a heavy puff of cigar smoke. "I'm hard, I am. An' don't try to gimme the rush act, if you don't want to go to your own funeral. Savvy? I'd shoot you jaspers just to see how high you could jump when the lead hit you. Savvy?"

"Well!" Yonson barked, "come on down. Nobody's going to try to swallow you, you confounded coward!"

Beezer Smith's face paled.

"Easy, now, Mr. Blowhard," he warned. "Don't puff your gas too hard. It'd take less'n two cents to get me started pumpin' you full o' hot lead. Savvy?"

"Still hard, drinking my Scotch, and smoking my cigars, too," Yonson grunted, noticing the man's faltering steps.

"Stand back, plug, an' shut your trap. I'm right ready to blast you if you get gay with me. Savvy? This gat shoots straight, an' you know I'm a hard bird to get mixed up with, too."

He waved the revolver threateningly.

"You jaspers get my line straight," he went on, still scowling. "I ain't comin' all the way down here for my health, an' I ain't doin' no foolin'."

The man from Galloping Flat was taking no chances of getting the worst of any encounter. He meant business—and he had come to talk business. That was evident by the manner in which he handled his weapon.

"I've come to tell you birds a thing or two," he growled on. "Get me right, too. I ain't foolin'—not a-tall. I'm talkin' straight."

He centered his gaze upon Yonson.

"I'm givin' you till in the mornin' to kick through with them pearls. If you don't do it—well, I'm gonna bump you. Savvy?"

"Well, for the love of mud," Yonson parried. "Have you got that bug of an idea, too? First it was Trotter and Cunningham. Then you come—all of you talking through your hat and about something that I know nothing about. What pearls are you driving at? I can't get the idea. You must be crazy!"

"Maybe I am, an' maybe I ain't," Smith answered. "Maybe I have got a bug of an idea. But, listen, old hoss, I'm a-tellin' you somethin' straight. See? I want pearls. If you ain't got 'em— Well, off comes the top o' your head just for luck. Savvy?"

He lurched a step forward, handling the revolver dangerously.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Yonson lied. "You are talking like a fool. I think you're drunk."

Smith's face twisted into a grinning sneer.

"Oh, you savvy," he assured the man before him. "If you don't—— Well, just remember what I said. See? Off comes your can the first thing after sun-up to-morrow, old jasper. I ain't kiddin' you none. Savvy?"

Yonson made no answer. He just looked at the man with his one eye ablaze with anger. That was all he could do. One could not be too careful with a drunken loon and a .44.

"An', listen, you other plug," Smith turned to Hornsby. "I know you! You ain't Husky Winters a-tall. You're old Phil Hornsby's son. See? Wise bird, ain't I? But you know I'm a-tellin' you somethin' straight. Savvy?"

"Well, what of it?" Hornsby demanded. "What are you going to do about it—shoot me, too, I suppose?"

Beezer Smith laughed drunkenly. The Scotch was going to his head. He took a step backward, resting his shoulders against the bulkhead.

"Naw, I ain't goin' to shoot you," he jeered. "You means money to me, 'cause your old man's goin' to pay a whoppin' wad o' dough to get his kid back home, see? Gonna cost the old bird about fifty thousand smackers. Savvy?"

"Is that all?" Yonson grunted.

"Shut up," Smith growled. "I ain't talkin' to you. I'm a-talkin' to that young jasper."

He waved the revolver menacingly.

"That's a lot of money, Beezer," Hornsby mused. "You'll be so rich you won't even talk to us. What are you going to buy?"

"That's my business, guy. Don't get gay."

He added the last sourly, his eyes blinking and his body slightly weaving.

"I'll tell you what to do," Yonson put in. "Go buy yourself a new face, Smith. Yours is a bit twisted—looks ugly."

"You got my line," Smith answered. "To-morrow mornin' you're goin' to be a dead jasper unless you kick in, savvy?"

"What good would that do you?" Yonson demanded.

Beezer Smith made no answer. He had spoken. He turned and mounted the steep steps cautiously. A few minutes later, as the forecastle slide was bolted in place from the outside, Yonson and Hornsby heard the voice of Toady Boggs lifting like a sad wail.

"Boy! Oh, boy! There's goin' to be more trouble. Ain't it hell?"

None of them knew that Hump Tucker and Red Morgan were plotting in whispers behind the forecastle bulkhead for the downfall of Beezer Smith.

VII.

"He ain't goin' to be square with the rest o' us," Tucker whispered. "Look how he's cuttin' up since he plugged the other guys. He'll *do* us, too. Wait and see. An' listen how he's been a-talkin' in there."

Tucker nodded toward the forecastle.

"I know, I know," Morgan whispered back in the semidarkness. "But he ain't goin' to *do* me. I ain't standin' for the rough stuff. No, sir, not me. I'll lay 'im cold mighty quick."

"No, you won't," Tucker whispered. "He'll keep one o' them gats 'tween you an' him all the time, an' if you tear loose, down you'll go, ker-flop! He's quick as greased lightnin' on the draw, too."

"How're you for workin' 'im?"

"Play up to 'im," Tucker explained. "Act like he's the regular mustard. Tell 'em what a fine bird 'e is, see? But don't forget to call 'im Captain Smith. He's kind o' muley 'bout that, see?"

Red Morgan grinned in the darkness. Hump Tucker had told him about the trouble with Beezer Smith.

"An' after you play up," Tucker went on, "watch for a chanct an' let 'im have it good an' hard—knock his top gear loose. Then grab the gats 'fore anybody else has a chanct to horn in on the circus. Get me?"

"Yeah, I get you," Morgan whispered, doubtfully. "But where do you come in? What tricks do you pull? I ain't goin' to be the fall guy, if it don't work out right, am I?"

"Shore not. Why, ain't I goin' to be lookin' for the same chanct to bust him at the first jump?"

"I guess so."

But Red Morgan was not at all sure about it. One could be sure of little or nothing aboard *The Rolling Dane*.

They were silent for several moments. They lacked confidence in each other. That was patent. Nor did they want it. It was something that could come later, if it came at all. If not, they had nothing to lose.

"But he sleeps with his door locked an' the gats buckled around him," Morgan broke the silence, whispering reflectively. "An' he never turns his back when he's close to anybody. He's on the watch all the time, an' you know it."

"Yes, I know," Tucker admitted. "But if we play up strong, coddle 'im good an' plenty, he'll think we're fallin' for his gaff, an' he'll get sorta careless-like. See? Then we'll nail 'im 'for he knows what's what. He ain't so wise, anyhow, you know—ain't an educated plug like you an' me, Red."

Morgan made no comment on the latter.

"How'll we split the works?" he wanted to know.

"Half and half," the other explained. "That'll be a wad o' jack—an' look what we'll make off'n Husky's old man. That'll be big dough."

"I ain't hankerin' for that," Morgan answered.

"You ain't?" Tucker's eyes widened.

"'Cause that'll mean playin' with bulls an' government jaspers. Old man Hornsby's a bird that'll set up a yell that'll be heard all the way to Yokohama, an' he'll have government jaspers on our trail for the next forty years—just houndin' us all the time. I'm for gettin' rid of that plug."

"I guess you're right, Red. I ain't wantin' to get mixed up with them government mugs, myself. But how'd you go 'bout gettin' rid o' him?"

Red Morgan grinned.

"Why, that's easy," he explained. "He might get shaky on his pins an' fall down—he might fall overboard some dark night. Anything can happen, guy. Why, he might back up against a capstan bar or a belayin' pin—suddenlike. You know. Sorta like Cage did. Get me?"

He winked and smiled—and Hump Tucker smiled.

"You betcha," he agreed. "Lotta things happen at sea."

"An' ships don't hit port—sometimes."

"That's right."

"An'—sometimes—whole crews get lost an' never show up—just naturally drop out of sight when the whole world ain't lookin'."

"I get you."

"An'—sometimes," Morgan went on, "one or two men come clear of a wreck, an' they go ashore an' tell 'em all 'bout how it happened. Then they settle down, peacefullike, an' don't go to sea any more. There wouldn't be nobody there to dispute their tale of the wreck, you know. Do you get my drift?"

Tucker nodded. He had caught the meaning.

"Why, Red, you're there. Slip me your mitt."

They shook hands roughly. A bargain was in the process of making.

It was at that moment that Beezer Smith had gone, blundering, down into the forecastle with his warning to Yonson and Hornsby.

The two men listened eagerly until Smith returned to the deck and bolted the scuttle slide in place.

"Well, did you hear all o' that?" Tucker whispered.

Morgan nodded.

"He's as drunk as a boiled owl," Tucker went on. "If he croaks the Swede, it's all off. He won't get a thing."

"Maybe he won't, an' maybe he will," Morgan reflected. "The Swede might kick in with the whole works at the last minute. Beezer is bluffin', anyway, I'm thinkin'. Don't you?"

Tucker shook his head.

"Naw, he ain't," he answered. "I know 'im. He's gonna bump that Swede. He's gonna bump 'im."

"An' you ain't thinkin' the Swede's gonna kick in?"

"Naw, he won't. Swedes's stubborn jaspers. I know 'em. They stick to their ideas, hard-boiled-like. It wouldn't do 'im any good if he did kick in Beezer's gonna croak 'im—he's just gotta cash somebody's checks, just mean."

"Well, we gotta take a chance."

"An' we ain't gonna get a thing, eh?"

"Yes, we will. If Beezer does," Morgan whispered with absolute certainty in his tone. "If he gets the junk, we'll top 'im off when he comes outta that fo'c's'le. I'm gonna have 'em if he gets 'em—or I'm goin' to hell on a flyin' machine. Are you with me, Hump?"

Hump Tucker nodded.

"I'll stan' the racket with you, Red," he affirmed solemnly. "I ain't got but one time to cash my checks an' kick in. See? I'm a game guy."

They shook hands again. The bargain had been made.

Dawn broke. Then morning came—daylight and the sun lifting from the eastern rim of the world.

Yonson and Arthur Hornsby awaited the coming of Beezer Smith. They had not the slightest doubt in the world about his coming, and they waited for it, grim and silent, as they breakfasted from a bottle of cold water and a tin of hardtack that had been sent down the night before.

"It sounded like drunk talk," Yonson mumbled, "but I've seen his kind before, and I know he's dangerous—especially when he's all tanked up on my Scotch. And if it wasn't for those six-shooters, he'd be as meek as a little lamb. I know his breed. He's as cowardly as they make them."

"It takes just that kind to shoot an unarmed man," said Hornsby.

"Oh, I know it! He'd do it in a minute and never flinch. But if we had him in a corner, it would be a different story altogether."

"But he's not going into a corner," Hornsby answered. "He'll be pretty careful as long as he is sober enough to know what he is doing. You know that."

"Yes, I know it. And that's just it—just why he's blowing so long and loud. But, boy, I'm going to give him a run for his money."

"I hope you do," young Hornsby answered. "And, remember, I am with you. If he *gets* one of us, he will have to get us both. Understand?"

Yonson smiled philosophically and twisted the tips of his long, yellow mustache.

"You'd better keep out of it," he advised. "It won't do you any good to get yourself bumped off along with me. Just stand clear."

"You heard me. I am with you. That part of it it settled."

"Just like your old dad," Yonson mused. "Damn 'im! He's one of the whitest white men I ever sailed with—a sticker through thick and thin."

The forecastle slide was thrown back. Beezer

Smith, with a six-shooter in each hand, came down the steps.

"All right, plugs," he ordered. "Stand back. Gimme lots o' room."

His face was pale. He was nervous, trembling all over. But he was determined.

"I've come for that junk, Yonson," he exclaimed. "Hear me?"

"Yes, I hear you," Yonson answered, pale but calm. "You said you'd kill me if I didn't come through this morning——"

"Yes, an' I ain't jokin'," Smith cut in.

"And, if you kill me, what good will it do? You wouldn't make a dime by it. You would only hang or go to the electric chair."

"Listen," the scowler flared up, "I ain't talkin' to you, plug. You keep your blasted trap shut. I might get nervous with this thing"—he jerked one of the revolvers sidewise—"an' pull the trigger."

"And old Phillip Hornsby would hunt you to the end of the earth," Yonson put in. "He'd never rest until he found the buzzards picking your bones."

"Is that so?" Smith sneered.

He was growing paler. His lips twitched, his teeth showing through the ragged slot of a mouth.

"Yonson, you're gonna gimme that junk," he said coldly. "If you don't, by heavens, I'm gonna blast you right here!"

Murder shone in his slanting eyes. Yonson saw it and realized that the end of his own existence was near at hand unless something unforeseen happened. Beezer Smith was just drunk enough to do anything.

Yonson sparred for time.

"And what if I do give them to you?" he demanded. "What'll you do, then?"

"I ain't sayin', bloke," Smith answered flatly.

"In other words," Hornsby put in, "you've just blundered in here this morning to kill a man?"

"Keep out of this, bloke," Smith warned, his words coming like sobs.

Yonson noticed the sound of that voice. Beezer Smith was in his most dangerous mood.

"I ain't foolin'," he went on, actually pleading. "I'm hard, I am. I'm gonna bump you, Yonson."

A shadow crossed the top of the steps behind the man. Red Morgan was mounting the poop with a capstan bar. Beezer, unaware of it, went on.

"I've made up my mind, I have, Yonson," the man's voice rumbled. "I ain't goin' to stan' an' chew the fat about it. Savvy?"

"But you haven't said what you were going to do, if I do give them to you?" Yonson sparred. He wanted time to think. Beezer Smith was only a matter of seven or eight feet away from him.

The shadow again appeared on the top of the steps. Red Morgan was on the slide—waiting.

"I ain't makin' promises," Smith said slowly, his lips hardening. "An' I've waited long enough——"

A cracking sound from above cut him off. The edge of the scuttle slide had given away, and down through the square of light plunged Red Morgan, capstan bar and all, like a tumbling sack of wheat.

With a snarl of fear, Beezer Smith leaped to one side and glanced behind him as the revolver in his right hand exploded from a nervous jerk of his forefinger, and a bullet buried itself in one of the bunk rails just above Yonson's head.

Then something else happened. Yonson saw a medium-built figure flash across the forecastle, clearing a ten-foot strip with a single bound.

Arthur Hornsby—alias Husky Walters—had attacked.

Yonson went into it with a bound. One of the revolvers exploded again, bringing a yell from Red Morgan as the bullet crashed through his arm just above the wrist, and the fight was on.

"Boy! Oh, boy!" Toady Boggs wailed at the top of the steps. "They've got Beezer's gats! They've got Beezer's gats!"

"Now, I'll do a little talking! Stand back!" Yonson yelled a few minutes later, as he leaped back with a six-shooter in each hand. "I'm still the master of this old hooker."

He was. Two hours later he sat in his cabin grinning at young Hornsby through the blue smoke of one of his favorite cigars. The rest of the crew had been housed back into the forecastle after the scuttle slide had been repaired, and they were locked in.

Hump Tucker was at the wheel, made fast to his post of duty by six feet of chain and two strong padlocks.

"Fighting men and fighting weather," Yonson mused with a grin. "Well, kid, I guess we'll have to tell old man Phil you've had your education."

Young Hornsby laughed.

"But what about those devilish pearls?" he asked. "Was that a fable, or was it a fact?"

"Not on your life." Yonson laughed. "Here they are, son."

He lifted one of his ponderous feet upon his knee and gave the heel of the shoe a hard twist. It came off in his hand. He did the same thing with the other shoe, to the amazement of his companion.

"Look 'em over," he invited. "Pretty, ain't they?"

He passed them over for Hornsby's inspection. And there, in their hand-fashioned place of concealment—which was no more than a hollow place in the top part of each heel—lay an even dozen magnificent pearls—German Charley's pearls.

"Beautiful!" Hornsby exclaimed as he passed them back to Yonson.

"Caused an awful lot of trouble, though," the old man mused as he replaced the heels in the same manner by which he removed them.

Then he poured himself and Hornsby a drink of that most excellent Scotch.

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A FAMOUS PIRATE

THIS was a French gentleman of birth and family, whose baptismal name has not come down to us, but, on account of whose prodigious strength, was known among the fraternity of buccaneers as *Bras de Fer* (Iron Arm). He was both prudent and bold, preferring to cruise along with a single vessel, named the *Phoenix*, than to engage in joint ventures.

On one occasion he was overtaken by a violent tempest, the wind destroying his sails and carrying away his masts. Finally a thunderbolt set fire to the powder magazine, blowing up the vessel, and about forty of the crew found themselves stranded upon a lonely isle, inhabited by ferocious savages. A large party of these surprised and attacked them the following morning, but after killing a great many of the Indians, and taking others captive, Alexander released these latter and so inspired them with terror as to preclude all further danger from that source.

With a sharp piece of whalebone he made a breastplate of very thick leather, which he invited them by signs to attempt to pierce with their arrows. Although long and strong, and shot with terrific force, the breastplate successfully resisted the arrows, which astonished them very much. How much greater was their astonishment, as well as their terror, when Alexander, from a distance of nine or ten paces, fired a snaphaunce gun, piercing through and through the breastplate and the whalebone to which it was joined. Never having seen firearms before, this lesson, together with an exhibition of his strength, which he assured them was common to all his race, proved quite sufficient to reduce the natives to a state of absolute submission.

After several days a vessel slowly drew near and dropped anchor. A boat was soon lowered, for the ship was in need of fresh water, and, crowded with men, approached the shore. There was a difference of opinion among the ship-wrecked mariners, some wishing to beg the officers of the vessel to receive them on board, while others, fearing imprisonment, counseled defending themselves. *Bras de Fer*, being of still a third mind, settled the matter by laying a careful ambush, the buccaneers all concealing themselves in the woods.

Although the captain of the ship, which was Spanish and armed for war, was far from suspecting the presence of foes such as these, yet knowing the temper of the natives, he sent ashore a party considerably larger than that of the survivors of the *Phoenix*. Nevertheless the surprise was so complete, and so fiercely did the filibusters engage their enemy, that they were slain to a man, after Alexander, himself, had conquered by main strength in a hand-to-hand encounter with the Spanish commander, in which he had been tripped by the root of a tree and thrown to the ground.

Stripping their dead adversaries and donning their garments, not forgetting their great hats, which covered all the head, thus disguised, they marched to the waterside, got into the boats and made off to the ship. There was no suspicion of their identity until actually on board, when, by reason of the fact that most of the soldiers had been with the shore party, they obtained an easy victory, and the vessel was soon theirs. Massacring all but a few sailors, they arrived at Tortuga with a fine prize, richly laden, after a series of episodes which seemed to prove, beyond peradventure, their good fortune, their hardihood, and their ferocity. Of the end of this singular man history is silent, but we know, at least, that he never paid the penalty on the scaffold.

ROVER ROVERO

BY FRANK MARKWARD

Why is your cutlass blade so red,
  Rover Rovero?
Ask the galleon's crew that lie with the dead,
Ask the lipping wash that runs o'erhead,
Ask the dripping blood our blades have shed,
  In the hands of the Rovero.

How did the men on the galleon die,
  Rover Rovero?
O, we boarded them when the sea was high,
When the sun hung low in the western sky,
And we sent them where ten thousand lie,
  In the ripping undertow.

Bring the drink—the fiery drink.
  Ho, for the rum glass high!
Ho, for the sea that keeps her dead!
Ho, for the Rover's sometime bed!
  Here's to the death we die!

When will the Rover sail no more,
  Rover Rovero?
When we meet the guns of a "fifty-four,"
When a hempen shrift shall tide us o'er,
When we sight a port on Hell's lee shore,
  Farewell to the Rovero!

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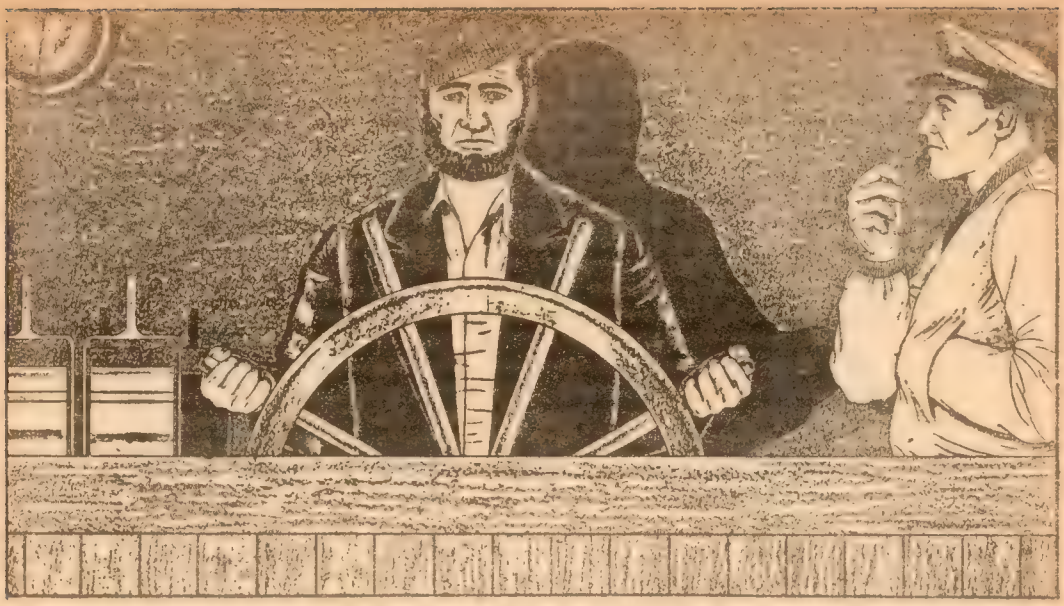

THE HUMPBACK

BY J. J. BELL

Do you know the humpback whale? It is big, even to eighty tons. It is the prize that modern whalemen from Iceland seek, they who go out in the northern waters in whale steamers. This whale story, by a master story teller and dramatist, moves with the grandeur and mysticism of a Scandinavian saga. When you have read it, you will long keep in memory the cruise of the Thorgrim, *the humpback whale, and the dream of Thorstein.*

IT was an evening in August, near the hour of sunset, and the crisp, sweet air was still. The bare, rugged mountain ranges were bathed in strong, warm, purple light; here and there a snow patch flushed pink. The sky was clear, save to the westward, where a violet mist overhung the placid sea. Off the mouth of Isafjord a fishing boat lay motionless, her sad-colored twin lugsails glorified in the beams pouring from just above the apparently northern horizon. Toward the fjord steamed the French cruiser *Lavoisier*, on fishery service, her far-projecting ram cutting cleanly through the water, her white funnels stretching in brown, unbroken trails for miles behind in the windless atmosphere. No other craft was visible on the vast expanse of Arctic Ocean.

About the shores, which the *Thorgrim* was leaving at ten knots an hour, were dotted dwellings, some with narrow, peaked gables built of wood and painted in gay colors—gaudy greens, crude reds, and bright blues, predominating. Many of these decorations had a fresh look, for in the last winter many of the homes had been wrecked by a blizzard from the arctic, and now the upper floors were practically new. On the rough ground beside the houses men and women were busy at the last of the haymaking.

For the Icelanders it had been a summer of plenty, so far as "plenty" is understood in Iceland; for the Norwegians, who owned the whaling station in the northern fjords, the season had been lean, indeed. Never had the great blue whale and his lesser cousin, the fin whale, been so scarce; never had disgusted gunners taken so many slender

sejhvals, in desperate endeavors to keep the blubber tanks boiling and the factory hands employed.

"I do not understand it at all," Sigurd remarked to the mate who was steering the *Thorgrim*. "I do not understand it at all, Thorstein. In twelve years I have seen nothing like it."

The mate, a huge Icelander, with shaggy, grizzled hair and beard, and melancholy blue eyes, offered no response; and Sigurd, who was now used to his fits of silence, continued: "Peterson has told me to-day that the hunting must close next week unless we get more whales. And last year we were getting good fish till the first week of September. I do not understand it at all. I remember when I first came to Iceland I saw many a big rorqual a few miles from the station. Old Svendsen killed a blue whale that gave one hundred and sixty barrels, not three miles from the mouth of the fjord. Since then the whales have been going farther and farther away, but we have always found them somewhere. Yet last week we went four hundred miles along the Greenland ice, and saw never a blue and but one fin. I tell you, I do not understand it at all. It has been a bad season for us, and the company will pay no dividend."

Styrmand Thorstein, steadying the wheel with his knees, produced a small snuff flask of horn mounted with silver, and applied it to his nostrils. "Ja," he said presently, "it has been a bad season; but I knew it would be a bad season, kaptein. I told you so in May. Be thankful it has not been worse."

"Worse!" Sigurd laughed shortly. "It could not have been worse."

The mate shrugged his shoulders and gave the wheel a half turn.

"I say it *could* have been worse." Thorstein stared gloomily ahead. "Death is worse than life," he said slowly. "There have been no dead men on the *Thorgrim*," he added, under his breath; and aloud: "Be thankful."

"Ach, you dreamer!" said the captain good humoredly. "You have been dreaming again! Why do you never have good dreams?"

"A bad dream is a good dream if one takes warning from it. To-day I had a dream which was a warning."

"You were sleeping on shore to-day," Sigurd remarked, with a smile. "I have noticed that your bad dreams come to you when you sleep on shore, Thorstein. Your wife gives you too good meals."

The mate ignored the pleasantry.

"It was a bad dream," he said reflectively. "We go to the ice to-night, kaptein?" he asked, after a pause.

"Ja. North to the ice, and then west."

"That is well. In my dream we went east, and not to the ice."

"Dreams go by contraries," said Sigurd, lighting his pipe. "So we go contrary to dreams."

Thorstein paid no attention to the observation. He said: "In my dream I saw Cape Langanaes, a great humpback, and the *Thorgrim*. And I heard the sound of hearts weaping—the sound that one hears only in dreams. I say it is well that we go west, Kaptein Sigurd."

"That shows what nonsense your dream was, my good Thorstein. But I should be glad to strike a great humpback now. It is strange that all the season we have not struck one, not even a small one."

"That is also well," said the other solemnly. "It is bad to kill the humpback that is man's good friend. My great-grandfather——"

The skipper rose from the seat in the corner of the steering box, and took the wheel from his mate's hands. He had heard about Thorstein's great-grandfather before. "You had better turn in now, Thorstein. Go and dream a good merry dream for a change."

The Icelander stepped aside from the wheel, but did not leave the steering box. "When my great-grandfather, with his brother, was fishing sharks off Gjögr one day in the year seventeen eighty-four, his boat was surrounded by the little, fierce-toothed whales; and they were going to attack the boat and devour my great-grandfather and his brother——"

"Ja," said the Norwegian impatiently. "And then a humpback came and beat and frightened the little, fierce whales, and kept them off till your great-grandfather was safe ashore. It is a very good story! But I have heard other stories—of humpbacks being eaten up by the little, fierce-toothed whales."

"Such stories may also be true," said the mate quietly. "But my story is as my grandfather told it to me, and it is the truth. And there are others in Iceland who will tell you that the humpback is the good friend of man. Yes; and once, when I was at Isafjord, I met a traveler—a learned doctor—and he told me that himself had read of the very thing I tell you in a book written by a Frenchman a hundred years ago. So I say it is not well to kill the humpback, kaptein."

Sigurd laughed and patted the man's shoulder soothingly. "Yet you have helped to kill many a humpback in your time, Thorstein."

"I have obeyed orders. But it makes me feel sick to see a humpback harpooned. Often he is so tame and friendly, and he comes so close to the steamer that is waiting to give him his death. And when the humpback is a mother, playing with her young one, it is—— Ah, I will turn in." He left the steering box abruptly.

"Sleep well!" the captain called after him. "Dream of a blue whale this time—a great fat bull blue whale—and where it is to be found."

But Thorstein shook his head and went slowly aft.

The sun had gone, and now the bare hills looked

brown and cold, and shadows deepened upon them. But the twilight would linger to meet the dawn.

The French cruiser, entering the fjord at reduced speed, would pass the *Thorgrim* at close quarters. Sigurd steered his little steamer to bring her within hailing distance of the big one. The *Lavoisier* had come from the eastern coast, and, perhaps, she might have news of the whaling there. Sigurd, who had more than once taken the chief officer on a short hunting cruise, now descried him waving his hand on the high bridge. He spoke into the tube on his right, and presently the engines stopped, and the *Thorgrim* glided onward, slower and slower, till she came to rest almost in the course of the cruiser. As the prominent ram drew level with the whaler, the Frenchman, leaning over the bridge, shouted in broken Norsk: "Off Langanaes—at noon to-day—whales—nordkapers!" he yelled.

Sigurd jumped. "Are you sure of that?"

The Frenchman was positive. He had made some study of whales, and knew a nordkaper, the cousin of the "right whale," when he saw one. "Good luck to you!" he called, as the cruiser slid onward.

Sigurd waved his fur cap and bawled his thanks. The next instant his mouth was at the speaking tube giving the order, "Full speed ahead!" and other instructions.

Ere the *Thorgrim* got into her twelve-knot stride her bow swung round to the nor'east and remained pointing in that direction.

"Kaptein!" said Thorstein, the mate coming slowly up the steps to the steering box.

Sigurd turned and smote him a hearty slap on the shoulder, and burst out laughing.

"Kaptein!" said Thorstein again.

"What now, dreamer? Ah! you heard what the Frenchman said. It was good, eh—very good? In the morning we strike a nordkaper! Think of it! A 'right whale' after all those weeks of nothing but little sejhvals! Perhaps we take two—and a 'right whale' has not been brought to the station for a year." Once more he smote the mate's shoulder and laughed loudly.

Thorstein shook his head. "I have heard tell of 'right whales' at Langanaes," he said slowly, "but I do not believe that the Frenchman saw any to-day. He saw humpbacks. Will you not go to the ice, kaptein, and maybe we shall get a blue whale?"

Sigurd emitted an impatient clicking sound and looked up at the compass.

"Even if the Frenchman saw 'right whales' to-day, they will be away now. It is a hundred and eighty miles to Langanaes. We cannot sight it for fifteen hours. Kaptein," the Icelander continued solemnly, "in my dream I heard the sound of hearts weeping. Off Langanaes there is bad luck. I pray you——"

"Hold on!" Sigurd was angry. "Have done with this nonsense! It is my wish that we go to Langanaes, and if I find no 'right whales,' and only one humpback, I kill him all the same. I tell you, Thorstein, I will kill him! I have my company to think of, also myself and my men. Do you want the men to laugh at you? Then tell them the foolishness you have told me. You Icelanders, you have too much time for dreaming in the winter. You should leave it in the summer. And what is a dream?" His voice became less harsh. "Many a dream have I dreamed, and never aught has happened. A dream is but a warm breath on a cold glass—a nothing. Think no more of your silly dream, Thorstein."

The mate hung his head and plucked softly at his grizzled beard. "When it is well with you, Sigurd, it is well with me," he said at last, very quietly. Then, as if rousing himself: "I will sleep now."

Sigurd nodded kindly. "After all," he remarked, "it is very likely that we shall get nothing but sejhvals. Send Ove to the wheel. At midnight you will take charge."

Thorstein seemed to be about to speak, but turned away without doing so. When the seaman Ove had taken the wheel, the captain once more seated himself in the corner of the steering box, puffing thoughtfully at his pipe, and glancing about him for weather signs.

It promised to be a fine night. There was scarcely a ripple on the water; the evening breeze was of the faintest. Astern the mountains rose clear in the twilight that was still too strong to allow the stars to be visible. Overhead, the sky was pale blue and cloudless; but above the northern horizon hung islandlike masses of brilliant, burning orange. There was no sound save the regular thud of the engines and the rhythmic wash of the bow waves.

Sigurd exhaled a long stream of smoke and drew a big breath of the keen air in a manner betokening satisfaction. A young man of sanguine temperament, yet until to-night the poorness of the whaling had been depressing him. Now the bare possibility of securing a "right whale," whose baleen was of considerable value as well as its blubber, acted on him like a stimulant. He ignored the fact that at the fag-end of the hunting season it would require an unprecedented run of luck in the shape of blue whales and nordkapers to make up for the leanness of the last three months. In the meantime it was pleasant to indulge in anticipations of a killing on the morrow, and as he thought of it he softly hummed a Norsk folk song.

He bore Thorstein no ill will. Many a time he had resented the mate's gloomy forebodings, but his resentment had never been of long duration. Thorstein was a good mate and trustworthy, though his moody nature had cost him his post on half a score of whalers ere he had shipped on the *Thorgrim* under good-natured young Sigurd. For an Icelander he was well off. Few of his neighbors in Sigluefjord touched money once in the year; they bartered their stockfish for other necessities. But

Thorstein and his wife possessed a little box of beaten brass, an ancient thing, a treasure of his ancestors for more generations than he could tell; and in it were many Danish and Norwegian five-kroner notes, a little gold, and some silver. They possessed, also, a son who was a poet—and a cripple. They believed he was a great poet, both in the Icelandic tongue and the Danish. The cripple's chief desire was to see the capitals of his own country and Denmark. And at the close of each whaling season Thorstein and his wife counted up the money in the brass box, and smiled and sighed, and sighed and smiled.

And they would bid the young man be of good hope.

For six springs Sigurd had brought from Christiania a parcel of books for Thorstein's son, who frankly loved him. Thorstein himself said little on these occasions, and frowned when his spouse let loose a torrent of thanks.

"Sigridur," he would say to her impatiently, "we will now drink-kaffe." Nevertheless the mate hoped his turn would come some day.

At midnight Thorstein came on deck, and another sailor relieved the man at the wheel. The night was now at its darkest, but not so dark that a ship required to carry lights. For many miles the eye could see whether aught moved on the ocean; but neither sail nor smoke was in sight. The orange hues in the north still glowed gorgeously, and from the higher heavens silver stars, encouraged at last by the dusk, peeped shyly forth. The breeze was still light—a mere breath from distant ice fields.

"It will be fine, clear weather at the ice now," the mate observed. "We have had nothing but fog here this season. But now——"

"If we get no luck at Langanaes," said Kaptein Sigurd, yawning, "we must try the ice again. Did you dream about that blue whale?" he inquired chaffingly, as he stepped down from the steering box.

"No, kaptein," Thorstein soberly replied. "I dreamed once more the dream I told you."

Sigurd looked amused. "That was not so clever of you, Thorstein," he said.

The other put out his hand in a gesture of appeal. "It is a warning! I tell you, Sigurd, it is a warning! Again I have heard the sound of——"

"Well, well, we shall see what we shall see," said the skipper, with another yawn. "I will sleep now. Do not waken me for nothing."

When he came on deck again the *Thorgrim* had crossed the wide mouth of Axarfjord, and was passing Rifstangi, one of the most northerly points of Iceland, about seven miles within the arctic circle. In the sunrise the distant inland hills assumed varying shades of purple and pink, and the green lowland made a vivid contrast with the rockbound shore and barren heights. At the end of a long point stood an ancient beacon; at the end of another, scarce a mile away, lay the skeleton of a French fishing schooner, one of the hundred that have met destruction on Iceland's coasts. The sheer cliffs and the sea beneath them swarmed with birds, and in a little bay a school of small whales gamboled lustily, smashing the glassy surface into foam, and sending up fountains of glittering spray. And once, not five fathoms from the *Thorgrim*, a glistening, grayish, triangular fin appeared and went cutting keenly through the water till far astern.

"Shark," remarked the captain to Thorstein, who was looking moodier than ever.

"Ja."

The captain altered the course a little. "We shall sight Langanaes in four hours," he said cheerfully. "I will get Karl to look out until you have slept."

"I will look out," said the mate. "I do not wish to sleep. I am afraid of sleep."

At this moment the cook appeared with two steaming mugs of coffee. The captain took one, and signed to Thorstein to follow him to the deck. They proceeded to the stern, and there the captain seated himself on a coil of one of the huge twelve-inch hawsers used for towing dead whales. After a sip or two of coffee he looked steadily at the mate, saying: "Thorstein, you must stop this foolishness. If the others heard of it they would laugh—at first. Afterward they would not laugh; they would begin to think it was not lucky to have you on board the whaler. And then there would be trouble. You understand?"

"Ja. I understand." Thorstein's eyes looked seaward.

The other took a mouthful of coffee.

"Did you ever hear of harm coming from striking a humpback?" he asked.

"No, kaptein."

"And you have seen many killed."

"It is so."

"Then why does the dream make you afraid? Have you ever dreamed a dream that came true?"

For a long minute Thorstein continued to stare at the water. "Ja," he said at last, turning his sad blue eyes on the other. "But I cannot speak of it." His hand shook so that he spilled some of his coffee. "I will go now and look out," he added abruptly, and went hastily forward.

A little later the captain saw him mounting the rigging to the crow's nest on the foremast. "What am I to do with him?" he asked himself.

At seven o'clock they breakfasted—the captain, mate, and engineer—on a stew of pork and onions, black bread, margarine, and more coffee. They had just finished eating when a call from above sent them swiftly on deck.

"Only sejhvals," said Sigurd disappointedly, after an inspection through his glasses.

"But you will hunt, kaptein?" said Thorstein eagerly. "They are in our course."

"Perhaps," said the skipper doubtfully.

He went forward to the gun, which he had loaded before breakfast, and examined its fittings carefully.

The whales—there were eight of them—were not far ahead, and their high dorsal fins showed plainly as they rose to blow.

Kaptein Sigurd was in a dilemma. The whole herd was not worth a single "right whale"; on the other hand, one sejhval was better than nothing at all. In a good season he would have felt justified in taking his chances off Langanaes, but in present circumstances he could not afford the risk of returning to the station without a catch. With a grunt of dissatisfaction he began to unscrew the bomb point from the harpoon head projecting from the stumpy red cannon. The mate, who had returned to the masthead, witnessed the action with relief.

"You will hunt, kaptein?" he cried.

"Ja," shortly replied Sigurd, emptying the grenade of its bursting charge. Upon the comparatively slim frame of a sejhval the explosion of a bomb is too shattering—from a business point of view. If the bomb does not pass through the unfortunate creature and explode on his far side, it is more than likely to rend him open from within. In bulkier whales the interiors alone are wrecked, and happily, death is not infrequently instantaneous.

As the *Thorgrim* drew nearer the unsuspecting animals, Thorstein, from his perch, selected a victim, and gave the steersman orders according to its movements.

The chase proved brief. The whale, when not at the surface blowing, swam at a leisurely pace not far beneath, and in the clear water. Thorstein's eye followed him easily. Soon the *Thorgrim* drew so near to the bluish-gray back that the oblong lighter blotches upon it were plainly visible, as were also the strangely small flippers.

At this point Sigurd took charge instructing the steersman by quick signs with his left hand. Two men stood at attention by the double steam winch, just behind the foremast.

Cautiously the *Thorgrim* crept upon the whale—nearer—still nearer—and yet nearer.

Sigurd slewed the gun to starboard, depressing its muzzle a trifle. Suddenly his left hand went high above his head. "Stop!"

With a hoarse sigh from his spiracles, the whale's head broke the surface, his back rose clear of the water, and the gun crashed out its dreadful bolt. And even as the harpoon shaft plunged through the blubber, his tail shot high into the air, and with a gleam of white belly and a flourish of flukes over the boiling sea, the whale sounded. The fifty fathoms of "forerunner"—that portion of the line which is carefully coiled on the ledge projecting over the bow, just below the muzzle of the gun—ran out like a streak, and the remaining hundred and twenty fathoms of three-inch yellow hemp began to jerk after it. But ere half of this had gone overboard the rush stopped. Wherupon the *Thorgrim* was backed until another fifty fathoms ran out. Then the winch was braked; but the *Thorgrim* was kept backing—backing slowly, obstinately.

A hundred fathoms ahead of the whaler the sejhval was struggling at the surface. He had not been prepared for a long spell below, he was sorely wounded, and he had nearly a thousand feet of cable and a steamer with powerful engines to struggle against. And so they hastened his end by drowning him in his native element. After that they hauled up the carcass, pumed air into it, and lashed it alongside. It was little over forty feet in length, and its blubber was thin—a poor prize.

The other whales could still be discerned from the masthead. Thorstein pointed in their direction.

"Langanaes," said Sigurd briefly.

It was afternoon when they sighted the cape that, from a distance, looks like a gigantic breakwater built by man, with its level top and perpendicular sides, seven miles in length, and never a tenth of that in breadth. Seven leagues north of the cave-riddled point the *Thorgrim* began to cruise in search of the hoped-for nordkaper. Here and there, their white hulls gleaming in the sunshine, lay French schooners taking toll from the fishing banks. These were the laggards, the less lucky, for the majority of the Dunkirk and other fleets had already sailed for home with full holds of salted cod, the reward of, perhaps, six months' toil and peril.

Sigurd brought the *Thorgrim* within hailing distance of one of the schooners, and bawled his question.

Yes, the French skipper had seen whales that morning early. The whales had gone. He pointed to the nor'east.

Sigurd knew well that the Frenchman wished the whaler far away from the banks, but he decided to try nor'east, and accordingly the course was shaped in that direction.

The mate was still in the lookout, by his own desire, with which Sigurd had not sought to interfere.

"You think we may get a 'right whale,' kaptein?" remarked the engineer, who had come on deck for a cool breath.

"It is only a chance. I intend to try for two days, and if nothing comes of it we shall go west again."

"It is worth while trying," said the engineer. "What is the matter with Thorstein?" he asked later.

"Matter with Thorstein?"

"Ja. Have you not noticed how strange he looks?"

"Thorstein is always a little queer."

"But he looks as if he were afraid of something. I thought perhaps he had got notice to leave the *Thorgrim* at the end of the season. It would be a pity for him. I do not think any other whaler would have him for steersman now."

"Thorstein has not got notice," said Sigurd. "Maybe he is not very well; maybe he is troubled about his son. Do not ask him any questions, Keller. He does his work well, and we have no business with anything else."

A shout came from the lookout:

"Steamer coming!"

Far ahead was a trail of smoke.

From the masthead Thorstein was peering through a telescope. "Ja. It is a whaler, and with a whale, for it comes slowly."

The captain slightly altered the *Thorgrim's* course. In a little while he was able to distinguish the approaching whaler through his glasses. Her hull was green, and her funnel pinky yellow, with a broad black top. She was not making more than four knots.

"They have two great whales astern," shouted the mate. "It is one of the Vopnafjord boats. It is the *Snorri*."

"Good!" cried Sigurd. "I know the gunner well, and will speak to him."

Thorstein took another long look through his glass, and when he made his next report his voice was higher than usual. "They have two nordkapers!"

"Saa!" muttered Sigurd, and cursed softly. And he cursed again, though he grinned when his friend on the *Snorri*, beaming with satisfaction, informed him that he had been hunting the two whales for more than a day, and had killed both within three hours. For the nordkaper often succumbs easily to the bomb harpoon, and, moreover, does not sink when death takes him.

"It is good luck for our last trip of the season," bellowed the Vopnafjord man gleefully. "I suppose I shall see you in Tonsberg soon. I leave Iceland next week."

"Are you not going after more nordkapers when you have got these two to the station?"

"There are no more of them, my good Sigurd. There were but two, and I killed them both"; and the speaker roared with laughter.

Kaptein Sigurd bawled a friendly enough farewell, waved his hand, and gave the order for full speed. He believed his friend, and the disappointment was a heavy blow. It had been a wild-goose chase.

He altered the course to west, and descended to the deck, where he walked up and down for half an hour, casting many a disgusted glance at the dead whale wallowing alongside. It was, indeed, galling. Two great nordkapers—and he had been a few hours too late. And the weather was not looking so well. Away in the northwest the horizon had taken on a brownish hue. In all probability he would reach the neighborhood of the ice only to get fogbound. He went forward and climbed up the rigging.

Thorstein, peering over the edge of the barrel, did not take his gaze from the sea.

"You see I am going to the ice," said Sigurd.

"Ja, kaptein."

Sigurd looked over his shoulder. He could still perceive Langanaes, or, at any rate, the mountains beyond it.

"Where is your humpback?" he said roughly.

A strange expression came into the mate's countenance, but he did not reply.

Sigurd, hanging on to the rigging, continued to search the water around him. All at once he made a quick movement, and seemed about to speak, but checked himself.

Five minutes passed, and then he made another quick movement, while a savage look disfigured his good-natured features.

"Man! Are you blind?" he exclaimed, gripping Thorstein's shoulder and shaking it. "What is that yonder?" He relaxed his grasp on the mate and pointed.

Half a mile off the starboard bow a shining black and rounded object rose above the surface. Thorstein, as if unwillingly, turned his eyes to it. It disappeared.

"Are you blind? With my own eyes I saw him rise—twice. You fool! You have not been watching."

"I have been watching, kaptein. He was only a very small sejhval." The speaker was trembling.

"You lie! It was the head of a great——" Sigurd stopped short.

The sea appeared to burst open, and a monstrous, unwieldy looking dripping creature, bearing a small hump in place of a dorsal, and gigantic pectorals, shot clear above the surface, and fell back with an amazing crash amid fountains of foam.

"Blaast!" yelled Sigurd, at the top of his voice, and the crew hurried to their posts. Then he turned to Thorstein. "So," he said wrathfully, "you would cheat me because of a crazy dream. You would cheat me of the greatest humpback I have ever seen. Go on deck, and keep out of the way. Go to your bunk, you that are afraid of a humpback——"

"Kaptein——"

"I have no more to do with you. Only keep out of my way. Ugh!"

And Kaptein Sigurd descended rapidly to the deck, where he immediately selected a man to take Thorstein's place. Next he gave instructions for letting the carcass of the sejhval go adrift under a flag.

Thorstein, on reaching the deck, looked appeal-

ingly in his captain's direction, but, being utterly ignored, went dejectedly aft.

The humpback continued to indulge in his ungainly gambols while the *Thorgrim* drew near him. He rolled about at the surface, exhibiting his tremendous "wings"; he stood upright in his element, poking his warty head above water; he made unexpected rushes here and there; and once more he hurled his eighty tons of bone, flesh and blubber into the air.

"The greatest humpback I have ever seen," said Sigurd to himself, as he screwed the grenade on the harpoon. "After all, I shall please them at the station to-morrow. Forty barrels will not be so bad."

But he did not sing as he usually did while preparing for action. The thought of the mate's deception rankled. Besides, he missed the mate's assistance. The man now in the crow's nest would do his best, but his experience was small.

However, Sigurd hoped to fire a good first shot which would make the struggle a brief one. And, certainly, the humpback did his best to make it so, for, after a little more play, he came leisurely to meet the *Thorgrim*. Perhaps her bluish-gray bottom deceived him into thinking her a friend.

Sigurd held up his hand for "stop." As the *Thorgrim* lay, the humpback, if he continued his course, would cross her bows.

But suddenly the propellerlike motion of his flukes ceased; it appeared as if he were gathering himself together for another rush or a downward plunge.

Believing that he was going to sound, the gunner took a quick aim and pressed the trigger.

It was a long shot, and not a very good one. It struck too far abaft the flipper; and though a muffled thump, as the mighty tail flew up, told that the grenade had duly exploded, Sigurd knew that death was still far away.

The cable ran out spasmodically, till its length was almost exhausted, when the winch brakes were applied, and the *Thorgrim* began to forge slowly ahead. Ere long, the humpback appeared at the surface, roaring and grunting, and struggling frightfully to free himself, rolling to and fro, lashing about his flukes, and broaching half out of the water—an agony shocking and sickening for any man save a whaleman to witness. Then he took to "bolting," making violent diagonal rushes; till, finding that also vain, he set off at a little distance beneath the surface, towing the *Thorgrim* at several miles an hour.

Meanwhile the gun had been reloaded, and when the pace of the humpback began to slacken, the winch was set going, and cautiously the cable was reeled in until once more the whaler was within shooting distance.

Yet again the luck was against the gunner. His shot was a good one, but the bomb failed to explode. And the humpback sounded so violently that the first cable—the winchman having let go the fraction of an instant too late—parted with a loud snap close to the bow, while the *Thorgrim* quivered to her sternpost.

An hour passed, during which the humpback repeated his frantic efforts for freedom, and then came an opportunity for a third shot. As he stood by the gun Kaptein Sigurd threw an uneasy glance around him. A change in the weather was imminent. Bluish-black clouds were swiftly gathering and the low sun was already obscured. A breeze, light but very bitter, ruffled the gray ocean, and the ice fog that had changed to pearl color seemed nearer. A flake of snow fell on the red gun.

The winch clanked, and the *Thorgrim* forged toward the whale, now lying almost motionless. But when the bolt struck him he was off again, like a runner who has got his second wind. Yet it was a deadly shot, and a smaller whale would have died speedily. With three harpoons in him and two cables behind him, however, his spurt was of short duration. Within a few minutes he was up again, spouting crimson and roaring through his blowholes.

"He dies!" said Kaptein Sigurd, with a grunt of relief.

"No, kaptein. He dies not yet."

The skipper wheeled around. "Get away!" he snapped.

Thorstein's pallid face flushed momentarily, and he stepped from the gun platform, but did not go far aft.

The captain signed to the men at the winch to wind in. They had not proceeded far when the humpback seemed to revive and resumed his struggles.

"Another harpoon—quick!" cried Sigurd, sponging out the gun, and nodding to the winchman to continue winding. He shouted for half speed ahead.

From his pocket he took a small cotton bag containing a charge of powder, rammmed it home in the gun, and followed it up with a wad. Four minutes later the slotted shaft of the harpoon filled the barrel, the bomb was affixed, the Krupp's screw for firing the charge adjusted, and all prepared. This time no cable was attached to the harpoon.

Crash! went the gun at close quarters, and the muffled echo followed.

"Now he dies!"

"No, kaptein, he dies not yet. Sigurd, I will give you every krone I have if you will let him go. Sigurd!"

"You fool! What do you mean?"

Thorstein hung his head. Every man on deck was staring at him.

"Go aft!" commanded Sigurd.

The mate hesitated, and then walked slowly away.

"He dies," said the gunner to the men. "See, it is the flurry."

The humpback was beating the water into scarlet froth. Presently he lay still, but he was not dead. He did not turn on his side, nor did he sink. Internally he must have been an awful ruin. Yet he lived.

The captain went to the galley and drank a cup of scalding coffee. Many whales had he killed by now; some had died quickly, others slowly. But none save one great blue had received four shots—three of them good—and yet clung to the ghost like this humpback.

He returned to the platform in thickly falling snow. "Now he dies! Bring me a lance."

The winches were started, and soon the humpback was lying under the port bow. Now and then a shudder passed over the monstrous bulk; the tail flukes moved feebly.

"Now he dies!"

Steadying himself against a stay, Sigurd grasped the long lance pole with both hands and raised it preparatory to plunging the point through blubber and flesh into the mighty heart beneath him.

But the blow did not fall. In the twinkling of an eye the humpback's tail flew up, and came down with a shivering smash against the *Thorgrim's* hull.

"Full speed astern!" and back went the *Thorgrim*, with a couple of her plates—upper ones, fortunately—badly started.

The whale rolled from side to side a dozen times, and lay still.

"Lower away the pram," ordered Sigurd, cursing the snow and the freshening wind—and the dead sejhval, which was nowhere to be seen.

The small double-bower boat was soon lying alongside.

Sigurd chose a couple of men to go with him, and they dropped into the pram. He was about to follow, when Thorstein gripped his arm. The mate's face was working terribly. "Let *me* go. Let *me* lance him, kaptein," he gasped.

"No, no!" came the impatient answer.

"Kaptein, let me go. I have been a fool—I am sorry—I ask pardon. Let me go. I want revenge on the humpback that made me foolish."

Sigurd pushed him aside, but again his arm was gripped.

"Sigurd, I will never ask another favor. I will leave your sight when you ask me. But let me go to lance this humpback. If—if you do not, I shall be a shamed man—a coward—all my days. My son will mock me."

The captain was touched. "You are not fit to lance a whale, Thorstein," he said. "I cannot——"

"I have lanced many whales. I have never made a mistake. What can I say, kaptein? You are a brave man. You must understand. Shall I go down on my knees to you? Let me go to lance this humpback. Then—then shall I dream no more foolish dreams; no more shall I deceive my good Sigurd. Let me go."

Sigurd wavered: "Are you sure you can do it?"

"You will see! You will see! Behold my hands! They are steady now! The madness has left me. And afterward you will tell my son that I did well. Let me go."

Sigurd gave in.

With a ghastly smile Thorstein went over the side. As the boat was rowed toward the whale, which now lay quiet, seemingly exhausted, he waved his hand.

The captain would fain have called him back. He told off two men to be ready with the second small boat.

The rowers of the pram, with their oars poised for dipping, waited breathless for the final assault.

Thorstein stood erect, grasping the lance, as brave a figure of a man as ever faced death, knowing it to be death.

The whale scarcely moved.

Thorstein marked the vital spot with his eye, drew a deep breath, and drove in the lance. The humpback rolled over, away from the boat, the huge, fringed pectoral fin, with its reach of some fourteen feet, waving stiffly aloft.

"Pull!"

An oar snapped. Back rolled the humpback, and down came the huge pectoral, a ton of bone and muscular blubber. Men and boat disappeared.

The *Thorgrim* went back to the station with her captures, but with her flag halfmast. She carried three dead men—dead men cruelly broken and bruised. The living were ready to testify that the tragedy had been nobody's fault—an accident that might have happened to any whalemen.

It was some time before Sigurd could talk about it, and it was not until the following year that he fully realized what had happened. He had gone one day to visit the widow and her crippled son, for whom he had done many kindnesses since the disaster.

"It is strange," said the widow, just before he left; "it is strange that Thorstein did not dream of what was going to happen. I have been thinking of it all the winter. For he dreamed of it before our little daughter died; and he dreamed of it before our son fell from the cliff. Perhaps he could dream only of the evil that would happen to others that he loved. He loved not so many people. But myself and his children he loved; and you, also, kaptein—you also."

And Sigurd, as he stood that night in the steering box, waiting for a strange mate to relieve him, recalled certain words of his old styrmand: "When it is well with you, Sigurd, it is well with me." And, perhaps, also—though he was no dreamer—he heard the sound of a heart weeping.

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IN THE INTEREST OF THE OWNERS

BY JOHN T. ROWLAND

A big five-masted schooner with a deck load of lumber, a mutinous crew, and a real hard case bucko mate of the true "Down East" variety, beating up the Nova Scotia coast in the thick of winter, against a howling northwest gale. And the skipper is forced to make his choice between his love for his brother and his duty to his owners. Out of this material John T. Rowland makes one of the best sea stories which we have seen in a long while.

ON a bright, sparkling day of northwest wind late in November, Captain Lowell Maxwell made his cheerful way through the swirling tide of lower Broadway to his agent's office.

Maxwell was a happy man. In command of a fine vessel, with his brother from Nova Scotia signed on as mate and a voyage to the West Indies in prospect, a less buoyant and vigorous person than he would have found life good. Most of the bother in going to sea nowadays comes from the lack of proper mates. But this difficulty had been most happily surmounted in the present instance. There would be no surly Dutchman or Swede doping off on watch or taking sides with the men, this voyage!

Brother Jed was as tall and lantern-jawed as the "old man" was compact and ruddy. Most strangers whom he came in contact with, regarded him as a saturnine individual. This was because he looked down upon the world from an altitude of six feet four inches with an expression of open contempt. His appearance, however, belied his disposition, as he had a quiet, easy going nature, when ashore. At sea he ruled the men with an iron hand. In this he was true to the type of "downeast" bucko mates, fine, good natured fellows ashore, but stern, heavy handed martinets when at sea, maintaining the most rigid discipline on his ship.

By comparison, Captain Lowell Maxwell was

cherubic in aspect. Forty years of seafaring life had passed lightly over his head. A scattering of gray hairs at the temples and a collection of tiny wrinkles at the corners of his humorous blue eyes appeared to be the only toll they had extorted. In certain foreign ports he was well known as "the laughing Yankee." Yet a physiognomist would have been struck by the curious fact—since both men were clean shaven—that Lowell's mouth was smaller and straighter lipped than his brother's. When a land shark in the form of ship chandler or dry-dock manager proposed graft to Jed Maxwell he placed himself in jeopardy of life and limb; when Lowell was offered a "commission" he accepted it and turned it over to the owners. That was the difference.

This circumstance probably did much to explain why Jed had been master only of little coasting schooners down Fundy way. These were all "hand pullers," lacking the refinement of steam power to hoist sail and weigh anchor, but they were at least a thorough school for seamanship; Captain Lowell could feel secure that there would be no soldiering during his watches below on this voyage. To tell the truth, he was rather pleased that Brother Jed felt at home on the deck of the great five-master. It is easy to understand the psychology of this.

He bounded up the dingy stairway to the more dingy office of his owners' agent. Behind a cluttered roll-top desk sat a mild, gray haired little man who greeted him with a hearty "Hello Captain Maxwell!" and a perfecto, all at the same instant.

The telephone jangled and there followed a conversation which seemed interminable to the impatient shipmaster.

At last the mild little agent tore himself away and swung his chair around to face his visitor. Then he demonstrated a surprising capacity for decisive speech.

"Maxwell," he said, "the Porto Rico charter is off. Instead, I am sending you light to Brunswick, Georgia, to load yellow pine piling for the Bay of Fundy. There's more money in it."

Captain Maxwell's face was a mask, but the owners' agent had no difficulty in reading his thoughts. Ten days or two weeks to Brunswick, another ten days to load, and then two weeks with the aid of the friendly Gulf Stream to the latitude of St. John. This would put him off the coast of Maine in a deep vessel with a high deck-load just as the new year was dawning. Ice, gales and heavy seas—some difference between that and the West Indies voyage to which he had been looking forward!

The agent glanced away a little sheepishly and stared at the blank wall.

"I kinder hate to send you down there, Lowell. But you know I have my duty the same as you. I guess you'll make out all right, now you've got your brother for mate."

"I reckon we'll make out," said Captain Maxwell. He got to his feet. A little of the spring was gone from his body and his face looked as nearly grim as he ever permitted it to do—ashore.

"Well, I'll take the gang back to the Commissioner and get the articles changed. That bunch would never stand to go north. I'll have to ship niggers in Brunswick. Good-day, Mister. I'll be getting under way on the first of the ebb."

He pocketed another perfecto which the little man offered him without a word, waved a chubby fist in valediction and hurried down the stairs and out into the sunlight.

II.

Incongruous as it may seem, Captain Maxwell's prophecy with regard to his crew proved correct. When they reached Brunswick not a man would sign on for the return trip; but where these hardy northerners feared to go Southern negroes were eager to rush in.

"They'll curl up once we get out of the Stream," growled farseeing Jed, "but by God I'll get some work out of 'em until then!"

Captain Lowell bit off the end of his cigar and grunted. He studied the work of the stevedores who were passing heavy cargo chains over top of the towering deck load. This consisted of more than two hundred "sticks" of piling, each one a tree trunk between 75 and 90 feet long, which filled the entire waist of the vessel and overtopped the bulwarks by nearly eight feet. In addition, the hold of the ship was crammed full of the same sort of cargo and under the combined weight—for these piles were creosoted and therefore heavy—she sat down in the water until her freeboard amidships was reduced to less than three feet.

"The owners ought to be getting a fancy price for this jag of cargo," Jed remarked.

"She'll pay expenses," was the "old man's" noncommittal reply. As a matter of fact he was at that moment doing a little mental sum to determine how many days' delay over the two weeks which he allowed himself for the voyage, it would take to eat up all the profits in grub and wages. The result was not reassuring.

"Jed," he said with an unusual warmth of manner, "we must drive hell out of those niggers. She'll need a few days leeway against being blown off shore. We can't afford to lose an hour while the wind is fair."

"Trust me!" said Brother Jed.

So it came about that once the *Esther J.* was clear of the land the driving process began. The big schooner was heading off nearly northeast to get well into the swiftest part of the Stream and as the wind fluked about between southwest and southeast

it required constant attention to keep the sails always trimmed most advantageously.

In addition to this heavy work there were a thousand odds and ends for the watch to attend to, lacings to be renewed and gear to be rove off and newer and stouter rope put in its place to meet the heavy weather "north of Hatteras." There is so much of this work on a big five-master that it would keep one watch busy without tending sail. Since Maxwell was prohibited by law from working more than half the crew at a time it followed that each half or "watch" while on deck was obliged to do what was really double duty. Upon Jed fell the burden of seeing that they did it.

For himself, he worked a twelve hour day superintending the men and stood his regular watches at night besides. Accustomed as the negroes were to lazy coasting voyages in fine weather they could not fathom the purpose or appreciate the forehandedness of their superiors.

For a while Jed Maxwell's constant exhortation to "bear a hand with that job or you'll all be swimming when the snow flies" awed them into acquiescence, but when day followed day of lazy Gulf Stream weather with the little fleecy clouds skimming past overhead they came to believe, childwise, that the threat was a mere bugaboo designed to increase their labors. What they chiefly resented was the unremitting labor at the sails, for this not only doubled the work but by driving the vessel faster lessened the time for its accomplishment.

"I wonder, sir," said Jed one day, "if we hadn't better go easy for a spell on the sailing? She'll be off Hatteras now before we can get new topsail sheets and clewlines rove."

"We must get her along, Mister," the captain tartly replied; "you mind your end of the ship and I'll look out for mine!"

After this Jed offered no further suggestion.

On the afternoon of the eighth day all the watch were engaged in renewing the head lacing of the mainsail, which had been lowered for that purpose. Ordinarily this would be a two-man job, but Jed had the whole gang hustling at it in order to get the sail set and drawing again with the least possible delay.

It was a troublesome piece of work for as each man pulled the slack of the lacing through an eyelet the one next behind him on the gaff had to hold it fast or the whole thing would ease off again and the labor be lost.

Just as they were finishing a flukey puff of wind struck in from ahead and the luff of the big after sail lifted slightly and began to flap.

"Spanker sheet, all hands!" called the "old man" from the wheel.

"Lay off that lacing, boys!" Jed commanded. "Let it go and come along while we sheet home the spanker."

Big Bahama Jim, the leading hand of the mate's watch, mumbled something and kept right on with his work. The rest did not even look up.

Jed sprang on the main gaff and seized the negro about the neck. Together they rolled off and fell to the deck. The white man was first to his feet. Without an instant's warning he landed a smashing blow between Bahama's eyes which drove back the negro's head with a resounding thwack against the boom.

"Will ye come along now," roared the down-Easter, "or will ye have more?"

The big black steadied himself with one hand and passed the back of the other across his eyes as though to wipe away a cobweb. Then he looked at the fire-breathing mate and grinned.

"See here, white man," he replied, "doan' you go makin' no monkey shines with me! Us-all is a-gwine to finish this job afore we do nothin' else. If yo' ole crate is a-goin' too fast to get the work done, lower down a sail, boy, lower down a sail!"

"Jumpin' codfish!" ejaculated the mate, his eyes staring.

He sprang to the rail and reached for an iron belaying pin, but at this juncture the master appeared upon the scene.

"Never mind that, Mister," he said quietly, "you'd only bend the pin." Then he turned to the men.

"You Bahama, come here to me!" It was as one would speak to a rebellious dog. Slowly the big black lowered his eyes. Even more slowly he slid down off the gaff and moved by some compulsion other than his will to the break of the poop.

"Take hold of that spanker sheet!"

One by one Captain Maxwell mustered the rest of the watch. Then he turned to the mate.

"It's a funny thing, Mister," he said in a loud voice, "but I had my fortune told before we sailed from Brunswick and the old woman said that one o' the crew would give the mate some backslack. And she said we mustn't use him too hard because right after that we'd catch a hellin' gale with freezing weather and ice right up to the cross-trees, so we'd need all hands to get the vessel in shape."

He seemed suddenly to remember the men sweating at the spanker sheet.

"That's well, boys!" he sang out cheerfully. "Make that fast!"

"Funny thing is," he resumed, "the glass is dropping right smart now. I shouldn't wonder if we were in for it by morning."

The negroes rolled their eyes and went back to work with more will than they had ever before displayed.

The captain passed close to Jed as he made his way aft.

"Look out for that nigger," he said in a low voice. "The grinning kind is bad."

Jed Maxwell was in a brown study for the rest of the watch. He had disciplined more rebellious sailors than he had hairs on his head and never be-

fore had he encountered one who blinked and came up smiling. But if he felt suddenly futile and ineffective he did not show it. The work went ahead with renewed celerity and Big Bahama seemed to show him the same easy going deference which he had all along exhibited. But Jed Maxwell went on watch after that with a revolver under his clothes for the first time in his life.

The next day was Christmas, and, by a happy coincidence, the last of the work of refitting was finished by noon. Captain Maxwell got a sight for latitude and placed the vessel off the Capes of the Delaware. This was even better progress than he had hoped for and rewarded him well for the "yacht racing" of the past six days. He called the cook aft and gave him an armful of cabin stores for the men's dinner. Then he went into his own cabin and peered at the barometer.

Captain Maxwell whistled softly and summoned his brother.

"Fell three tenth since eight o'clock," he commented laconically.

"I reckon," said Jed, "we'll start to snug her down after dinner."

The "old man" nodded. "Reefed fore and main, and storm trysail on the mizzen. That'll be what she'll carry for the rest of the road!"

By one o'clock the overcast sky had taken on a curious polished luster. The wind backed suddenly into the southeast and increased steadily in force. It was a raw wind which chilled the lightly clad negroes to the bone.

The word was passed for all hands to shorten sail. One by one the great sails were lowered and either reefed or furled entirely. By the time the job was finished the wind was blowing fresh out of the east and a rising sea was surging in before it.

Captain Maxwell called all hands aft to the break of the poop. The steward had brought up a quantity of heavy underclothes, socks, sea-boots and oilskins from the ship's "slop chest."

"Boys," said the old man, "you're going to need these. Each man step up in turn and pick out his size. Bahama, you're first."

Now that the bad weather was actually upon them the "boys" were eager enough to draw their slops. They pawed over the garments to the accompaniment of a running fire of comment and advice from the steward, who was the only one possessing a rudimentary knowledge of the Three R's: "Heah, you li'l black Tim! What you-all do, boy, wif a forty size drawers?"

"He wants to wrap them around him twice!" interjected the "old man."

"Lor', sah, cap'n, da's de warmin'est nigger ah eber done see!" roared Bahama and the rest convulsed themselves with mirth. Little Tim not the least.

As soon as a man found a garment which seemed likely to fit him he would plunk down upon the deck and proceed to try it on. Big Bahama was the first to secure a full outfit. His Herculean torso, well swathed in woolens, seemed threatening to burst the suit of yellow oilskins, and his arms stuck out stiffly like those of a sawdust doll. The round black face, wearing an expression of comical discomfort, was almost eclipsed by the brim of a great yellow sou'wester. On his hands were huge red woolen mittens.

The rest, when they beheld this apparition, literally doubled up with laughter, and even Captain Maxwell had to support himself against the corner of the house. Bahama made a quick dive for his discarded clothing and scurried off to the forecastle, much after the fashion of a hurried duck. Howls of delight went after him.

Pretty soon there were more of the initiated in the forecastle than without and then the advent of each newcomer was the occasion for a demonstration of joy.

All this time Brother Jed stood by with an expression of scandalized amazement on his face. When the performance was over he turned to walk aft.

"Great—jumpin'—codfish!" said he.

Captain Maxwell grasped him roughly by the elbow.

"Wake up, you sour-faced bonehead!" he cried. "Don't you know that laugh saved us a mutiny!"

But Jed only shook his arm free and kept on.

III.

The end of a week of incessant gales found the *Esther J.* still battling northward under storm sail. By skillful seamanship and an uncanny ability to estimate drift and leeway Lowell Maxwell managed to keep her within the Gulf Stream. The sea ran high and she wallowed in it so that the deck load was frequently awash, but while the northeast wind blew bitterly cold the water was still so warm that the ship did not ice up. Otherwise the interstices between the sticks of piling would have filled with ice weighing hundreds of tons and the vessel would have become topheavy. Aloft, the masts and rigging had turned a ghostly white where the spray collected and froze.

The temporary deck of loose planks which had been built on top of the deckload to make it easier to get about and handle sail had long since disappeared overside, and the men had to run as best they could along the slippery logs, taking to the rigging like great yellow cats when a bursting sea threatened to sweep them overboard.

Sometimes at night one would miss his footing and slip down between two "sticks" and then the working of the deck-load was likely to break a leg or crush the life out of his body. Two of the crew were already laid up with lacerated thighs.

During this time Captain Maxwell kept severely aloof, preoccupied—as he had good right to be—in his reckoning. Never once did sun, moon or star give him a chance for a "sight," but no hour passed of day or night when he did not appear on the quarterdeck to study silently the behavior of the vessel. For probably half the time she was hove-to, and whatever forward movement she made was due solely to the current of the Stream, but when the wind hauled far enough out of the northeast to allow her to head her course there would be lively work and hard driving to make the most of the "slant."

In this brutally heavy hauling of stiffened canvas and half frozen rope Jed reigned supreme. The "old man" had only to sing out: "Hey, Mister! Set the reefed main and mizzen!" Then Jed's great voice would bellow out above the roar of wind and crash of seas and the watch would cluster about him like big frightened children to do his bidding. At such times he stood virtually double watches.

With sail set and the wind somewhere near abeam the big schooner would forge ahead like a titanic snow plough, burying her bows to the catheads in onrushing seas. A wall of solid water sometimes tore across the forecastle head and burst over the deck-load, to pour off in a seething, wind-snatched torrent a-lee. Then the struggling watch had to hold hard for their lives.

Jed was everywhere. Now he hauled with the men on a rope, again he sprang up the rigging to repair some threatening weakness in the nick of time—for neither blows nor curses could drive the blacks aloft—and more than once he saved some sailor's life by seizing him in his great boney arms as he was headed straight for oblivion overside.

Yet Jed was more than happy, for in his estimate they were having an easy passage and a speedy one. He was proud of the ship and the way his brother handled her and, best of all, they had not met so far that dreaded winter curse, the terrible northwest gale which blows for weeks on end and drives ships hundreds of miles offshore. A few days more and they could "swing her off for the land" and stand into the Bay of Fundy with a fair wind.

At last the sun came out. Captain Maxwell was on deck with his sextant even before the entire disk appeared. A few minutes later the man at the wheel sang out to Jed that the captain wanted to see him in his cabin.

Lowell's face was drawn but his blue eyes sparkled. In the privacy of the cabin he threw off formality just as naturally as he assumed it on deck.

"Better than I thought, Jed," he exclaimed. "We're near up to the latitude of Cape Ann. With this breeze o' wind out of the east'ard I think we can swing her off for Grand Manan. Get all the sail on her that the gear will stand!"

Even the blacks understood the meaning of the maneuver which ensued. A shivering cheer went up from their throats as the big schooner swung off and took the wind over her quarter. She seemed to their eyes almost to fly before the following sea.

Past were the days of misery. Cold it was still, but there was no call to face the stinging spray while the ship labored and fought for inches. She reeled off the long gray miles with a swinging roll to her stride while thunder boomed under her bows and the wake stretched broad astern.

For the first time in a week Jed and the captain ate their dinner together. Big Bahama held the deck, with nothing to do but supervise the steering. There were two men at the wheel.

"I reckon," said Jed when the meal was finished and the brothers lingered for a few moments of luxury over their cigars, "I reckon somebody must 'a' wanted this piling mighty bad to charter a vessel down here in the dead o' winter!"

"Nothing to it, Jed!" his brother laughed. "This is the cheapest form of transportation, and it's cheaper right now than it will be in the spring—that's all!"

"You mean the owners ain't makin' a pile out of all this hell-an'-misery?"

Lowell shook his head in despair. "Jed, I could get you command of the finest vessel on the coast if I could only teach you not to be so damn' simple over money! Of course the owners aren't making a pile: fact is, if we got blowed off and lost a week's time they wouldn't hardly break even on the expenses!"

"Well," said Jed slowly, "if we ain't doin' this because some one wants the pilin' bad or because the owners are makin' money out of it what in hell *are* we doin' it for—sixty dollars for me and twenty-five a-piece for the niggers?"

Captain Maxwell did not smile. He took the cigar from his mouth and studied the ash with absorbed attention.

"Jed," he replied at last, "you know as well as I do why we're here. It's for the same reason that made the agent close this charter when he could just as easy have fixed her for Porto Reek. There's more *chance* for the owners to make a little money out of it. Whatever concerns a ship, from the agent's office down to the cabin boy, has got to be done in the interest of the owners. Nothing else counts.

"You've been doing that way all your life, but I guess you never stopped to think of it before."

Captain Maxwell was rising from his chair when the messroom door flew open and Big Bahama stepped across the threshold. The giant negro had taken off his oilskins and boots. He stood glowering at Jed while his massive body blocked the doorway.

"Well," said the "old man" coolly settling back in his chair, "what's eating *you*, Bahama?"

"Jest you-all set still, white man. It's dat mate I'se after. Ah doan' know how soon we'll make the land, an' Ah doan' figger fer to miss mah chance!"

With one hand behind him he locked the door and pocketed the key. Jed glanced quickly at the only other exit from the place and saw the door open a crack. He waited to see what the captain would do.

"Hold on!" Lowell commanded sharply, "I suppose you know this is mutiny, eh?"

The big black was breathing hard and the whites of his eyes rolled like an infuriated bull's. It was plain he was past reason or hearing.

Jed pulled out his revolver and slid it across the table to his brother.

"Look out for the door!" he warned quickly. "I'll tame *this* gorilla."

They met in mid-air and went down with Bahama on top, but Jed's fist had landed a stunning blow, and he was able, thanks to that, to squirm out and gain his feet at the same instant as his antagonist.

The negro fought solely by instinct, which in his race is to grasp and rend. His mouth was open and his great yellow fangs were bared. Jed felt his spine tingle at the sight of them. He launched a terrific blow. The black's head flew back and he spat blood and teeth in the other's face.

Jed sprang back. He caught a glimpse of his brother coolly holding half a dozen men at bay with leveled revolver. He took time to smile at their simplicity for supposing him unarmed; then he dropped suddenly to his knees as the ship rolled toward him and Bahama delivered another charge.

It was an old trick and a simple one. The negro's feet flew out from under him. He went flat on his face. Before he could move Jed had caught a strangle hold. Little by little it tightened as Bahama struggled in the vise-like grip. At last he shuddered convulsively and went limp.

One might have supposed this would end the activity, but Jed was only warming up to his work. He sprang past the captain and landed blows right and left within his long arms' reach. The mutineers broke and fled for the deck with the long legged mate bounding after them.

Only the two men at the wheel stood fast, their eyes rolling with excitement. The rest of the crew ran forward over the deck-load as fast as their legs would carry them. Over the forecastle-head and out onto the bowsprit the mate pursued them. On the tip end of the reeling jib-boom they clustered with the sea beneath.

"Doan' you-all come out heah, Mistah!" one implored. "We all fall off an' git drown' suah!"

"Then come in here and take your medicine!" Jed replied; and when no one seemed inclined to lead the way, "Ambrose Sherman, lay in off that jib-boom!" he thundered.

With the castigation ended Jed made his way aft in a happier and easier frame of mind than he had enjoyed at any time since he joined the *Esther J.*

His cheeks still burned and his arms were swinging like threshing flails with the machinery not wholly arrested when on the break of the poop he encountered Big Bahama just coming out of the forward companionway from the messroom.

Bahama's face was bloody and he walked with a reel not born of the sea, but as his eyes met those of the white man he threw back his head and gave him stare for stare. The great arms were half raised and the fingers crooked in a grasping position as Jed crouched with fist drawn back.

But the "old man's" voice cut in, sharp and incisive.

"Here Mister," he cried, "we've had enough o' that!" Then he added: "Let that man go forward whole; he's the only real sailor in the crowd."

"I suppose that's for the owners, too!" Jed grumbled as he stopped at his brother's side and turned to look after Bahama's retreating back. "That nigger ain't properly cowed yet, by a jug-full!"

Captain Maxwell smiled grimly.

"We're going to catch it out o' the nor'west before morning," he replied.

IV.

With Lurcher Shoal six miles away under her lee and the bold, rock-girt coast of Nova Scotia behind it the *Esther J.* found herself in about the worst position imaginable to encounter a northwest gale.

It was not bad judgment that placed her there. The risk was inevitable, given the vessel's destination. The gamble was simply whether she could get around the corner and safe up into the Bay before a nor'wester hit her. Captain Maxwell had taken the chance with the odds apparently in his favor, but the east wind died prematurely and while the swift Fundy tide sucked the vessel in, a light air came down out of the north, with snow, and then—about four o'clock in the morning, the blizzard struck in.

Compared to this wind, the easterly gales of the past week had been balmy. In spite of their heavy clothes the negro crew "curled up," as Jed had predicted they would do. They could not even steer, because not a man of them could grip the spokes of the wheel effectually or hold his eyes open in face of the cutting wind. So the "old man" was obliged to take the wheel himself.

Jed stormed forward with a flashlight in one hand and a belaying pin in the other. His charges were docile but helpless. At the first hint of a nor'wester he had cautiously let the sails run down, all but a reefed mainsail and fore-staysail, so he, at least was not caught napping under a heavy press of canvas.

The problem now was to reef and set sufficient

of the other sails to render the big schooner manageable. Otherwise she would simply drift sidewise down upon a lee shore.

Bahama, though he must have suffered no less acutely than the others, seconded the mate nobly in his efforts.

"You an' me'll pass the lashin's, Mistah," he called out. "Dese niggahs kain't do nuffin' now 'cept pull on a rope!"

Side by side and hand to hand the white man and the black struggled with the thrashing canvas. When at last a sail was ready for hoisting Bahama would swing around with a booming roar:

"Tail on to dem halliards, niggahs! Up she goes, boys! Give her de air!"

In that trying hour while the ship made leeway faster than she went ahead all personal animosity seemed to have vanished. Bahama showed the qualities of a true leader of men. Jed, on the alert at first for a sudden tiger-like spring, came at length to understand that so long as the ship was in danger he had nothing to fear—paradoxical as that may sound.

At last, when the late coming dawn had turned darkness into an almost equally obscure gray, the work was finished.

"Go into the fo'csle, you fellows, and get warm," Jed shouted. "No use for a lookout in *this*."

On hands and knees he made his way along the ice sheathed logs and joined his brother at the wheel.

"How's she goin'?" he sang out.

"Fine!" Lowell answered. His face was so stiff that he spoke with difficulty. "She'll fetch up into the Bay on this slant."

"Den she be all right, boss?" It was Bahama, who without the mate's knowledge had followed him aft.

"Sure! We'll anchor under St. Martin's and wait for clear weather——"

"Cap'n," the negro cut in eagerly, "you-all go warm yo'-selfs. Bahama'll steer—ain't cold no longer a-tall!"

Captain Maxwell glanced from the big black man to the gaunt face of his brother, then bethought him of his own numb fists which seemed to have grown to the spokes of the wheel.

"Well, I guess we might," he said. "Give her a good full, Bahama, and keep her going. Come on, Jed; some coffee won't hurt!"

In the companionway he had an afterthought. "I'll fetch you some coffee, Bahama, as soon as it's made," he shouted back. The helmsman nodded and grinned.

In the quiet cabin, with the howling, swirling, hissing blizzard shut out, Jed suddenly discovered he was very tired. His shoulders sagged and the room seemed to spin before his eyes.

With an almost inaudible groan he dropped onto the leather divan. "Jumpin' codfish, I'm beat!" he said.

Lowell was fussing in housewifely fashion over an oil stove.

"No wonder!" he answered soothingly. "But thank the Lord we've got *one* sailor on the ship who can steer!" He secured the coffee pot with a wire and turned up the wick. "I don't know but I'm driving the old packet a mite too hard," he went on, "especially with this deck-load; but the sea hasn't got up much yet and I *do* want to fetch a decent anchorage before the wind hauls and heads her off."

"Let her go!" Jed exhorted. "Let her go till you hear St. Martin's horn bearing west-nor'west, and then down hook in thirteen fathoms: Sleep! Oh, my eyes! Sleep——"

The little clock in the companionway pealed the hour and the following half hour before Captain Maxwell shook his brother by the shoulder and awakened him.

"Here's your coffee!" he said.

Jed sprang up, rubbed his eyes and gulped down the steaming black liquid. Two more cupfulls followed before he pronounced himself awake.

"Now I'll go give the nigger a spell," he announced.

"I'll take a look around again, myself," Lowell remarked. "It seemed to be trying to clear, a little piece back."

The two had buttoned up their oil jackets and were just strapping the sou'westers under their chins when there came suddenly a slatting noise from the forward end of the ship and Bahama's voice reached them faintly above the scream of the gale.

"Flyin' jib's adrift!" he shouted warningly. "Done broke out o' de stopper—beatin' hisself to shreds!"

Jed glanced covertly at his brother. It could do no harm beyond the loss of the sail—no very great matter in itself—and he full well knew the peril of that slippery jibboom. Might it not be as well for one to propitiate the deity of the storm?

But Lowell at the first note of warning had sprung for the deck. Now he thrust Bahama away from the wheel.

"Go and secure it!" he shouted, "what there is left. Step along, Mister"—this to the mate—"or there won't be anything but the rope!"

Together Jed and the negro scrambled forward. All the way Jed was muttering strange Covenanters' curses under his breath. But when they arrived on the forecastle-head he grabbed Bahama by the shoulder and held him back.

"I'll go out," he snapped. "Stay here and tend the downhaul."

Captain Maxwell waited patiently at the wheel. After a few minutes the flapping of the sail stopped.

There was a long wait; then Bahama appeared out of the swirling snow—alone.

Lowell Maxwell had scarcely time to give utterance to his awful presentiment when the negro burst out: "De mate am overboard—hangin' in de chains!"

For a horrified instant the Master stood rigid. Bahama, watching cunningly, sidled around to catch him if he fell. The next moment, however, the negro stood beside a deserted wheel.

He laughed silently as he caught the kicking spokes and steadied the vessel on her course.

"Go 'long, white man," he muttered, "save'm ef you can!"

When Captain Maxwell came aft his arms hung limp and he stooped like an old man.

Before the wheel he brought up, and his glance by force of habit sought the compass. At sight of it he roused a little and raised a hand to shelter his eyes from the snow.

"East-north-east, won't she do any better?" he asked.

"No sah, cap'n. De wind done head her off."

"But that's right for the beach—— Well, keep her so while I go look at the chart—— Maybe we can find a hole——"

He turned full around and stared in the helmsman's face.

"Bahama," he said, "that downhaul was cut by a knife!"

The big negro threw back his head, but answered not a word.

When Captain Maxwell's official log reached this point in our story the terse, seamanlike narrative ended. Among his effects, however, when the wreck came to be searched more thoroughly, there was found a water-tight tin box containing private correspondence. On the top was a sealed letter addressed simply: "The Owners."

It was dated 9 a. m., January 3rd—the morning of the *Esther J.'s* loss.

"Gentlemen," it ran, "I have just recorded briefly the incidents leading up to the very awkward position in which I find myself. There will probably be no further opportunity to write anything in the log, so I am addressing this letter to you to give you some idea of my intended actions.

"Perhaps I am partially deranged by the grief which I suffer, and it may be that you will consider me unfaithful to my trust, but it cannot be helped. I am going on deck now to shoot my brother's murderer. After that I will do all I can to save your vessel."

At the bottom stood the modest copybook signature, "Lowell Maxwell, *Master*."

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A DEEP-WATER JOKE

PADDY observed a sailing ship heaving up her anchor, and, as he watched the anchor came into view It was a big, old-fashioned anchor, with a large wooden stock. After it was clear of the water it had to be catted. This necessitated much bawling and shouting, the crew straining and singing at the capstan. Paddy watched this operation, until, suddenly remembering the steamer's anchor housing in her hawse pipe, he rowed on, saying in utter disgust, "Arrah, ye can heave 'n' haul 'n' strain yersilves till ye bust, but ye'll niver git thot big hook, in thot little hole."

AN EXAMPLE OF THE "NELSON TOUCH"

ON February 7, 1797, after having reconnoitered the Mediterranean, Nelson, then a commodore and flying his broad pennant on the frigate *Minerve*, put into Gibraltar in order to see if any news had been received which would lead to the discovery of the Spanish fleet. As Nelson entered the harbor, two Spanish ships of the line and a frigate anchored outside. The information that the Spanish fleet had been seen from the rock several days before, steering to the westward, was then obtained.

Knowing that the British fleet would soon meet the Spaniards, Nelson immediately decided that he would be at the battle. Disregarding the Spanish force farther down the bay, he got underway, several hours after he had entered. As the *Minerve* hove up her anchor, the Spaniard's ships of the line were also observed to be in motion, and the chase began.

After several hours the cry of "man overboard," rang through the *Minerve*. At this time the leading Spanish ship was almost within gunshot range of her quarry, while the second one was close on her heels. For a man of Nelson's mental attitude is was a critical moment, as he scorned the idea of allowing anything to fall into the hands of an enemy. And yet the odds bearing down on him were overwhelming. Two ships of the line, against his frigate. A boat was lowered commanded by Lieutenant Hardy After searching the sea for some distance Hardy signaled that the man could not be found. But how could the boat be picked up? If the *Minerve* stopped, the Spaniards would be within range of her. Nelson hesitated, then quickly made his decision. "By God I'll not lose Hardy. Back your mizzen tops'ls." And here was proof of the extent of Nelson's fame at that time, for the Spaniards observing the maneuver and not knowing the cause of it, instead of keeping on, immediately hove to. Nelson then picked up the boat and went his way, having no difficulty in escaping the Spaniards.

THE STORM RAIDER

BY ERNEST HAYCOX

Mr. Haycox has written a ripping narration of the government's search for a Russian "terror of the coast" who had long raided the American fishermen's traps along the southeast Alaskan coast and who had escaped among the numberless islands, bays, and indentations of that stormy rock shore.

WHEN the water began to boil on the weather shore of Annette Island the cannery tender *Star* swung around for Ketchikan to ride the storm, rather than cross the straits to Moria Sound. The wind rattled the window-panes of the pilot house and whipped up the boom of the breakers smashing against the jagged finger of Cape Chacon, far off. The storm clouds clamped down the fog of coming night.

Just off Dall Head, going through Nichols Pass, one of the crew lashing down the seining table on the aft deck ran forward.

"Bob, come here!"

The skipper turned over his wheel to another of the crew and came out of the wheelhouse. "Well?"

"Look—off the quarter—see!"

Bob followed the man's hand. Very dimly he could see the lithe gray form of a boat smashing through the channel. The wind, coming up the straits, pushed her on, and she piled through the water with incredible rapidity. Now she leaped high into the air, seeming to hurtle forward; now she plunged down out of sight. And always she rushed on. It seemed impossible that any boat could go so swiftly.

"The *Storm Raider* again!" cried the hand.

Bob ran for his binoculars and focused them on the craft. After a long inspection he nodded. "Yep. The *Storm Raider*."

The crew had now clustered aft, huddled closely together as rain and wind beat down on them, staring through the night at the boat which had come from some mysterious place and was now rapidly fading into the bloom of the dark horizon; a thin, phantom boat.

"Some poor devils are in for a night of it," whispered one man.

"Aye!"

"And there's three of our company traps up the way he's goin'!"

"By Godfrey, yes!"

Bob turned back to the wheelhouse. "Ah, you go down and tinker a little more speed out of those engines. We're in a hurry to get to Ketchikan."

Thus it had always been. The first that men saw of this sinister pirate crew was the drab, lean, and swift glimpse of their boat, piling along in the teeth of an approaching storm, going swiftly up some far-off channel. And then the viewers, coming into town to ride the storm, would spread the word that the *Storm Raider* was abroad once again.

This rakish craft was never seen save when a hard blow followed swift on its heels; and the view was but for a moment, as some great roller lifted the boat to the crest and outlined it against a dark and misting coast. That was all; the next minute it would be gone, giving the impression of a sure and swift fate bent on the execution of some decree.

The *Star* slid between the protecting islands. Night closed about them and the pounding of the engines was drowned beneath the pounding of the breakers inshore and the howling of the wind as it rose in volume. To the starboard were the glimmering lights of the Indian settlement, Metlakatla, now and then breaking through the fog. Buffeting down Nichols Pass they turned again into the channel and shortly were at the city float.

Bob went directly to the naval officer, Lieutenant Pack, and notified him. "The *Raider* again," said he. "Beating up Clarence Strait, with a full wind behind her. Going like the devil."

Pack sighed. "Oh, damn! Must I go out every miserable night in Alaska? Oh, well—— Thank you, Collins, very much."

After the skipper of the cannery tender left, Pack went aft to the crew's quarters of his boat and sought out the bo's'n.

"Ferry," said he. "Go round up the rest of the crew. We're in for a night of cruising."

Ferry went in a hurry. Pack walked forward to the pilot house and drew out a notebook. Therein was a series of entries stretching over two years' time. Each entry represented a successful raid of the pirate boat. Something of a look of distaste and anger settled on the pleasant features of the lieutenant as he ran over each entry, noting the traps raised, and the direction the *Raider* had escaped in, when last seen. Underneath each record was some cryptic sentence as to the run of the tide at the time. Each time the tide seemed to buck the lieutenant and favor the *Raider*.

There was a curious thing, the way this evil genius who navigated the drab craft managed to utilize the boils and eddies and rips of the hundred and one arms and passageways of that broken coast. Pack took a great pride in his own seamanship; during his three years in the North he had made a careful survey of the Inside Passage and had cruised up a great many of the arms and canals. Yet each time he pursued this devilish boat—and that had been full twenty times—he had always lost her in the black of the night; now bucking against some roaring wind that crowded down the narrow walls of a canal, now fighting desperately to keep seaway in the immense inferno of water and wind that piled through Dixon's Entrance, now jockeying with a great tide rip that set the bow of his boat around and around.

Pack had become a wonderful navigator in these two years of chase; but he had never caught up with the *Storm Raider*.

He drew out a chart, lit his pipe, and studied the coast for a long period.

"Now," he said to himself, "he's been south of the Entrance three times running. He'll go north this time. Fish are running good around Petersburg; they're making fine hauls of sockeyes. That's his idea." He put the chart back into the map locker.

The sound of the crew coming aboard got him up. He slid into his slicker and pulled on his hip boots. A rising excitement filled his eyes with a twinkle. This had resolved itself into a duel of wits. He was pitted against the wild and reckless skipper of the pirate craft. "By George!" he cried out to the walls of the pilot house. "I'm going to get that man, or I'll leave the service!" And his fist smashed down on the chart table.

The bo's'n entered. "All here, sir."

Pack recovered quickly. "Very good. We're off to the north this time, Ferry."

The sub chaser churned away from the dock and swung upstream. The protected channel was quickly covered. Even here a strong chop jarred them from the port quarter. Darkness held them tight about.

"How," Pack asked himself for the thousandth time, "can a man lift a trap in weather like this?"

And that was one of the mysteries of the boat. Every fisherman in Alaska had asked that question. None had ever found a satisfactory answer. Traps are not, usually, to be lifted save in calm waters.

An onslaught of wind drove them hard a-starboard. The man at the wheel swung sharply to get back on his course. "It's a bad night, sir," he ventured.

Pack rubbed the pane and tried to peer out. "Picked up the first blinker yet?"

"No, sir."

They were jerked up, as if they had run into some immense rubber bumper. The bow went sailing. Pack clawed at the hand railing. "It's a nasty time to be out," he said.

The lookout's voice came trailing down the

speaking tube. "Blinker away off on the port quarter."

"That's it," said Pack. "Now turn her north by west. I think we'll try Ratz Harbor first."

Michael Karel swung his wheel over to meet a roller. It gathered the boat beneath it and flung it up. For a moment it poised there, silhouetted against the channel coast, with the angry waters falling away below. It was at that moment that the *Star*, far off on the other side of the channel, saw it. Then the roller dissolved and the sharp nose of the *Storm Raider* cleaved the water and plunged down. Karel braced his body and eased the wheel.

He was a burly figure. Clothed from head to foot in oilskins, he looked like some mammoth bear reared on its haunches. The oilcoat was enormous, fitting tightly over great broad shoulders, and pinching the biceps of the man's arms as they swelled and fell away with each move of the wheek He wore no sou'wester; the unkempt, blond hair fell about his head and joined a beard that came to the middle of his chest. His face was square and blocky with small, close-set eyes that constantly gleamed with some kind of malevolent and enormous humor.

He swung the wheel again and the boat slid sidewise, falling against the peak of a wave, to rebound and heel far over. He shifted a spoke, the nose came up and steadied. Some great overflowing viking spirit surged within him and a mighty gust of laughter swelled up from the throat of that enormous man, rumbled to his lips, and died away.

The compass swayed wildly from point to point. Yet he scarcely ever looked at it. Now and then he wiped away the fog from the pane in front with one of his paws and stared through. A far-off blinker was his sole guide. It was dark now and the boat pitched and tossed to the increasing gale that ripped up Clarence Strait, full and strong from the sea. Somewhere back was the pounding roar of the waters smashing on Moria Rock. And continually that gusty, base rumble of wild, barbaric amusement shook him.

He turned his head half about and let out a bellow that crashed through the pilot house.

"Chichigoff!"

Shortly the trapdoor leading from the engine room opened and a man, heavily swathed in oilskins crawled up. "Yes?"

"Get out the rigging!"

"Yes—all right. Have we been sighted?"

"I think so. That navy boy will be looking for us again. Bah!"

"Some day—maybe he might——"

"Get out the rigging!"

"Yes."

A near-by blinker guided Karel. He shoved his wheel hard to port, ripping open the window to lean out. A fierce blast of rain beat in. It drenched his head and cascaded down his beard, falling in rivulets against his slicker. He slowed the boat down, still watching carefully.

Only the gleam of the near-by blinker guided him. The roar of the waters closed in and surrounded the boat with its fury. He moved the wheel imperceptibly. The crash of the breakers swelled the higher, enveloped them, and on the next moment died away behind. They rode in easier fashion now, being in a protected arm.

He switched his controls over again and crawled on at half speed. Weaving in and out they came to the far end of the arm. At the very tip of it, a hundred yards distant, a gleaming light from a shanty window gave evidence of the trap keepers. Hard by the boat, to port, loomed the piling of a driven trap.

Karel drifted the boat alongside. A hand on the foredeck threw out a line and made it fast. Karel stepped out of the pilot house and went aft. The crew, seven of them, were clustered around a skeleton-shaped rigging with long arms that swung out over the side of the boat, with a chute that led into the hatch. A dory had just been lowered over the side and two men stood by it.

"All right," said Karel in a subdued roar. They dropped into it and pulled away toward the house. Here in the cove the wind came around the protecting points with a small show of force, rolling the quieter water into waves that broke on the beach with a flat smash.

Two men swarmed up the ladder of the piling and loosened the lines holding the net in the heart of the trap, casting them down to the boat deck. Another hand made them fast to the winch. Still another figure went from place to place, high up on the scaffolding of the trap, slashing here and there with a knife, in ruthless fashion. This finished they stood in readiness, watching the man at the winch. He looked at Karel, and Karel peered toward the shanty.

The sound of oars came to them and Karel retired to the pilot house. Through many years he had remained a figure of mystery on this coast. No man had ever seen his face while lifting a trap. Once, long ago, a trap keeper had accidentally stumbled into the pilot house when brought aboard, and had come, face to face, with the Russian. That man had not lived to tend other traps. His partner, tied to a dolphin, was rescued to tell the story.

The dory scraped alongside. The crew on deck reached over and hauled up two bound figures. They were taken forward and lashed to the rigging.

"All right," came the booming command of Karel, from the pilot house. The man at the winch turned the lever. The heart of the trap rose up, tipping the boat by its weight. It swung clear of the water, and the beating of a thousand fish or more rose over the sound of wind and water. The winch stopped. The crew pulled the boom over and the

net dipped toward the chute leading into the open hatch.

The fish went sliding in with a great rush, and the boat righted itself with a jerk. In a stroke the lines of the net were cleared and it fell over the side. The hatch coverings were slid back.

The trap was lifted.

But the haul was disappointing. Where they had expected five or ten thousand fish there were only a thousand.

One of the crew let out a shout of triumph. Instantly Karel was out of the pilot house and at the side of the man. He gripped the other's arm with his hand. The man cried out in pain.

"Shut your mouth!" growled Karel in suppressed fury. "Do ye want the word to tag you by that voice? That's the second time ye've did that."

The man suppressed a groan. Karel turned to the crew. "Get the men back to their shack." A raw irritation edged his words. It was given to him to make his lawless cruise but once in a while during fishing season. And this cruise had been a failure. The steps of the approaching prisoners warned him. Instead of retreating to the pilot house he pulled his sou'wester down over his face and walked close to them.

"You swine!" he said, the irritation mounting higher, almost to a shout.

One of the men fell back. But the other, braver than his companion, stood up to the Russian.

"Swine yourself," said he. "I take that from no man when my hands are free." In the dark he appeared to be a red-faced Irishman.

"Hah!" It was an enraged shout. Karel's arm punched forward. The Irishman's head snapped back with an audible crack. He crumpled and sagged, while the blood came welling from his mouth. One of the crew caught him.

"Get them back!" shouted Karel again.

The man hoisted the prisoners over the side and pushed off into the darkness. Shortly the dory was back, was hoisted aboard, and Karel swung the *Raider* down the channel.

The boat went by the protecting point and was again caught up in the storm. They passed through the roaring breakers, but Karel steered the boat up the channel, shouting, as he did so, for one of the crew. In response a man came through the trapdoor.

"Get back to the aft deck and watch for the sub chaser," Karel roared at him.

The wind behind them increased its force. They went rearing up, they came smashing down. And always they went swiftly on. Karel broke into a strange and weird song in a barbaric tongue. The echo of it filled the pilot house and blended with the fury of the elements.

As he towered over the wheel, chanting wildly, he seemed to be one of the long dead, far remote Russia vikings once more sailing the north Pacific in quest of stray galleons and seeking strange lands on the American coast.

The lookout came crawling back. "The chaser!" he cried. "I saw her searchlight behind us." Fear swayed his voice.

Karel answered with a roar. "The lieutenant puppy! Will he never learn?" He nursed the wheel over a bit and swung toward the coast. Throwing open a side window he looked out and back. A searchlight swept the waters behind him very dimly. It was not strong enough to penetrate the gloom and search out the pirate boat.

For an hour the boat plunged ahead. Karel, now working with a kind of careful, nursing energy, directed the craft into each rolling stringer of water that would boost it along. His very energy appeared to push the craft through the water.

At last he throttled down and turned in again, going through the same roaring surf, passing into a protected, parallel channel, and coasting rapidly along it. A series of complicated maneuvers followed, passing from one inlet to another, circling one dark island to come by its successor. Now the wind assaulted them; again it was calm. Now they struggled through some narrow pass through which the water hissed. And at last Karel throttled down once more, and roared for the crew to stand by.

They clustered along the railing. The land closed in to right and left, and the branches of cottonwood trees fairly hung over their sides. Karel drifted the boat cautiously into a small cup-like cove, and the anchor went plunking over. They were secured in a dark bowl, with no visible outlet.

Karel came out of the pilot house and surveyed the spot for a moment before turning to his crew. "Get below," he shouted.

They went down, much like tired and stricken sheep.

The news came speeding into Ketchikan with the first company boat. "Trap cut and raided. One man three quarters dead from a fist blow of that barbarian."

They brought the stricken trap keeper in town later in the day and took him to the hospital. He died that evening, just about the time Lieutenant Pack shoved the nose of his boat into the city float, dog-tired and blear-eyed from a night and a day of searching.

They brought word of the affair to Pack just as he was ready to climb into his bunk.

"Damn that man!" he exclaimed. "I wish I had a half a chance at him. Just an even break."

"Didn't you run into him? Weren't you near Ratz Harbor?"

"Man! I spent half the night within a hundred feet of the mouth. It was storming like the devil and I took the wheel myself to keep off the rocks. *See!* I saw nothing but a lot of water. He's as

slippery as an eel. He knows every creek, every inlet, every tiderip in Alaska."

"He killed the poor trap keeper."

Pack groaned. Turning over he switched off the light in the man's face. "Sorry; I'm dog-tired. But if I never do another thing in the world I'm going to get that man. My brain's as good as his." And he fell asleep.

That was the beginning of a campaign on Lieutenant Pack's part. For three weeks he pored over the maps of southeastern Alaska. His boat was on the go continually, exploring one arm after the other. He kept, in the pilot house, a large chart of the entire section, dotted with red and white pins. From time to time as he came back from his voyages he went to the map, inspected it grimly for a moment, or so, and added another pin.

News of his mysterious cruising got about town. Men said he was trying to find the secret harbor of Karel. And more or less they began to laugh at him. Their respect for naval officers, never at the highest point, slumped the more. Pack felt it, yet said nothing. He merely clamped his sizable jaw a little more firmly down and went about his solitary cruising.

One day he got a letter, addressed in a huge sprawling hand. The contents were brief and sarcastic, and well nigh illegible:

My lieutenant puppy. You won't ever get me. Dumb head, go away and play with your little tub of a boat. I heard you were looking for me. Well, look. Next storm I'll be in Behm Canal. Michael Karel.

Whereupon the lieutenant sat down and did a difficult bit of dead reckoning in psychology. Immediately thereafter he called a meeting of prominent cannery owners.

"This," said he, "is to make an arrangement with you people when the next storm comes up. I've never been able to get Karel because he's had the whole coast to dodge me. He knows every bit of water and every trick in side-stepping on the coast. When I go out to meet him I'm handicapped. Now what I want to do is to block that side-stepping. Here's the idea. Next storm he'll raid a Behm Canal trap. I have that fairly well figured out. The fish are running strong there; he's been the other way last time; and, being cocksure, he wrote me a little defy saying that I might meet him in Behm Canal in the next storm. All right. Now when that next storm comes I want a half dozen cannery tenders to block the five or six inlets leading off from the canal. I want a straightaway with no possible side exits. That's give me assurance that he's not side-stepped up one of the arms. It'll be an out-and-out race between us—a jockeying match if you like. Understand?"

They discussed the idea at some length. Pack managed to arrange the boats to his order.

"Now remember, whenever you see a storm brewing, don't wait for anything. Send out your tenders to the particular spot we've agreed on for each of you. God knows what traps he'll raid. But at least he'll have no pockets to slip into. And there'll be merry hell to pay when I get behind him. I've chased him quite long enough to learn some of his own pet tricks in sliding through the water."

Thus did Pack lay the machinery of a stormy night's duel of desperate seamanship.

That duel came three weeks later when a raw cold wind drove the boats to harbor and dark fell over a high-running sea that swept up the long arms and channels and smashed against the protruding fingers of rock lining the passageways, while above the storm could be heard the beat and surge of the waters as they boiled and eddied beneath the driving fury of the rushing winds.

Pack swung out into the channel at the first hint of night. On both sides of the channel tugs passed him, bound for shelter. And as he turned the nose of the sub chaser up and into the southern end of the Behm Canal night fell tight about them.

An immense roller threw them high on its crest, poising them there for a brief instant, as if displaying the boat to the gods of the elements as it entered the arena of battle. Pack had taken the wheel himself. His solitary cruising about the hidden waters of the coast had been for that single purpose; he had sought out and marked the backsets of current, the eddies, and the tiderips. He had determined to make this a personal battle. All he asked was a straightaway. He wanted a fair fight with this wild Russian.

The storm pushed him along. He eased his wheel with a kind of delicate, intimate touch, now watching his compass, now peering out through the fogged pane. He did not dare to switch on his searchlight and seek his way with it. The danger was that the Russian might pick it up. So he trusted to luck and his own seamanship. Something of the pirate's own ruthless disregard for safety possessed him.

Five miles up the canal he swung in toward the first trap and turned on the searchlight for a brief instant. The light revealed nothing but a great mass of water driving high against the pilings. He snapped the light off and went on.

The next four hours passed in the same manner. They visited trap after trap, slowly cruising toward the northern end of the canal where it again opened to the straits. At each trap they gave a quick, stabbing inspection with the light, then moved on, and loud above all pounded the angry roar of a wild and raging sea, sweeping along through the gap.

A call from the lookout brought Pack's ear to the speaking tube. "Ahead, sir," came the voice. "I saw a searchlight snap on and off about five hundred yards ahead—a couple points off the starboard. I think they're trying to locate the Henry trap."

Pack switched on his searchlight. It cut through

the storm-filled night, fading into blackness at the far end of its focus. But it lit things up sufficiently to reveal, vaguely, about five hundred yards away, as the lookout had said, a boat, tossing high in the water. A wave threw it over for a moment and Pack saw the sharp lines of the craft, and the curious arrangement of the mast. "There she is!" he said, speaking into the tube. A huge grin lit up his face for the moment. "I'll beat him at his own game."

The *Raider* saw the sub chaser's searchlight. She had been moving toward the trap on the right side of the canal, some five hundred yards to the starboard. But now she sheered off, and went to port. Pack saw, with a great glee, that in the sudden turn the Russian had allowed himself to be caught on the very edge of the tiderip. It whirled the nose of his craft halfway around before she answered the wheel and straightened out.

The *Raider* led away, fairly outlined by the starchlight of the sub chaser. The beams of light revealed strange views of valleys and dizzy cliffs of water, with the jagged peaks whipped off by the wind; the boat struggling through this, plunging, rolling, with always the water pouring in great sheets from its scuppers. Once it went far over and half its bottom glistened in the light.

The cox'n crawled into the pilot house and stood by Pack. "Will we open the guns on him, lieutenant?" he asked.

Pack shook his head. "Not yet. I'm going to head him off, make him turn around, break his damned Russian pride."

"Then will we use the guns?"

"I don't know. I don't think we can get them into operation. It's too rough to stay on deck."

"I could make a dash for the three-incher and lash myself to it, sir. Like to try it."

"We'll see."

He moved the wheel over. Ahead, the Russian veered sharply to port and the pirate craft's weather side came full into the wind. She went far over, recovered, and tacked to port still more.

Pack grinned. "See her go!" he cried to the cox'n. "Here's where the fuzzy barbarian thinks I'll go back a mile. There's a tiderip in front; he's going to skirt the far shore and slide by it. Thinks I'll ram right into it and get swamped. Now watch, cox'n!"

He swung to starboard. The wind caught the boat and flung it sidelong against a retreating roller, and the crash brought her up with a huge jar. Pack eased the wheel away and they plowed ahead once more, sidling always to starboard. The rocky coast advanced on them rapidly. The light, shifting here and there under the coxswain's guidance, played across the mouth of a river a hundred yards away, setting strong into the channel. The rollers, coming up the channel hurled themselves into the oncoming current of the river, and the result was a great scarred battlefield of water, with the tide swirling madly in a thousand different directions, eddies and boils one within another. Where the rollers met the river they sprang high into the air and the wind, whipping the tops away, drove them through the night in a kind of sea rain.

Pack skirted this area, coming up to the land as close as he dared. Right by the mouth of the river he swung the head of the sub chaser around and plunged straight into the churning battlefield, driving across. On the other side of the channel the pirate boat skirted the short, creeping by the edge of the rips, heading north for the inlet of the canal.

The current picked the sub chaser up bodily. Pack cried out: "Hang on! And trust to luck!"

They went whirling around. In one brief instant they had changed their course to due south, and on the next moment were half around again. They rocked as a crazy house might rock in a cyclone. The terrifying suck and slap of the whirlpools and mountains of water roared into the pilot house.

"It's a chance!" yelled Pack, clinging to the wheel. "I shoved her as near the head of the rip as I could. If we manage to hit the current setting out northward we'll be blown out on that side instead of skating back!"

The coxswain clung to the handrail. An immense wall of water charged out of the night, swept over the deck, smashed against the pilot house and continued on. A window shattered and the water poured in. They struggled ahead in a crazy, weaving way.

"I believe we're making it!" Pack yelled. At the same moment the boat was catapulted out of the maelstrom, sidewise. Pack struggled with his wheel. They were through the rips, on the north side, being driven rapidly toward the other side of the channel, toward the pirate boat.

"Turn on the light!" cried Pack. The coxswain had switched it off. He turned it on again and worked the lever, sweeping the water.

"There!" he howled. The searchlight found the *Raider*. She was hugging the shore of the canal, coming on slowly. By the reckless, desperate maneuver he had made, Pack had his boat spewed out directly in front of the *Raider*. The Russian's path was blocked!

The *Star's* searchlight played full and strong on the advancing boat. Pack saw the huge form of Karel lean out of the window, staring at him. The Russian raised and shook his fist savagely. But he came straight on, as if to ram the sub chaser.

"He won't be checked, will he?" yelled Pack. "Well, I'll give him a belly full of sense. Coxswain, get the boatswain to bring up three or four three-inch shells. Then you make a dash for the gun. Fire over his pilot house the first time."

The coxswain disappeared through the rear door. Shortly after the lieutenant saw him dash forward, throw himself flat upon the deck, and make the

loose end of the rope around him fast to the gun supports. A moment later the deck was swept under water. The coxswain came clear, ripped the covering off the gun and signaled back. The boatswain rushed forward with a shell, and scurried back to shelter.

The coxswain jammed the breech-block forward, trained the gun, and fired. The report of the gun sounded above the storm. The Russian shrank back for a moment as the shot went over his pilot house. Then he leaned forward and shook his fist again. Next, Pack saw the bow of the other come swinging directly around on him.

The boatswain rushed forward again with a shell, then back. The coxswain loaded, aimed, and fired. The next instant a hole appeared in the pirate's pilot house, slightly to one side of the wheel. The boatswain ran forward with the third shell. The coxswain loaded but held his fire for a moment. Michael Karel, filling the whole front of the pilothouse window, clung to the wheel, heading straight for the chaser. They were not now fifty yards apart. In one short instant they would crash. In the glare of the light the Russian looked terrifying. His hair streamed about his face, plastered down by the pelting rain, and his features, now visible, were lit in a kind of uncontrollable, berserk rage.

A boat's length separated them. The coxswain crouched down, aimed and fired. At the same instant Pack swung his wheel hard a-port and sheered off as the other boat plunged wildly on. The shot carried away half the Russian's wheel. The pirate leader stood immobile for a moment, glaring at the chaser, trying by his will, it seemed, to force a collision. Then he slipped down out of sight.

They went by at arm's length. Pack saw, as they came abreast, one of the crew leap forward and seize the few remaining spokes of the wheel, attempting to hold the boat into the weather. Another of the crew opened the door of the pilot house and waved a hand in defeat.

Pack turned about and followed after, closing in on the *Raider*. Coming abreast once more he signaled for them to follow behind. In that fashion he led them to the shelter of an arm a half mile farther on. There both boats rode out the blow. Pack bound up the wound of the Russian who, even though he had been to the very rim of death, thrashed violently in his captor's arms and swore barbaric oaths of revenge. But the man had the constitution of an ox. He had lost an immeasurable amount of blood and still lived.

Late in the afternoon of the following day the sub chaser came cruising slowly into the Ketchikan harbor, with the *Storm Raider* limping along behind. As he jerked his controls over to neutral and heard the lines go hurtling out the dock, Pack turned around and looked at his pin-decorated map of southeastern Alaska. Taking a blue-headed pin he moved it to the spot where he had checked and caught the *Raider*.

That completed the map. He sighed gratefully and lit a pipe. Chuckling just a bit he made for the deck, to hand over to the marshal of the town and a posse the broken figure of the one-time terror of the coast.

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GREY'S RULES-OF-THE-ROAD RHYMES

Green to green or red to red,
Perfect safety, go ahead.

If upon my port is seen
A steamer's starboard light of green,
There's naught for me to do but see
That green to red keeps clear of me.
But if to starboard red appear,
It is my duty to keep clear.

Then act as judgment says is proper,
Ease her, go astern, or stop her.

Whether in safety or in doubt
Always keep a good lookout.

There are numerous jingles about the weather, of which the following are a few:

A red sky at night is the sailor's delight.
A red sky in the morning is the sailor's warning

First rise, after low,
Indicates a stronger blow.
Or an even better one:
Long foretold, long last;
Short notice, soon past.
(Referring to the barometer.)

Rain before seven,
Clear before eleven.
When the sun sets behind a cloud,
A westerly wind will you enshroud.
When the sun sets as clear as a bell,
An easterly wind as sure as hell.
When the wind shifts against the sun
Trust it not, for back it will run.
When the glass falls low,
Prepare for a blow;
When it rises high,
Let all your kites fly.
(Referring to the barometer.)
When the rain's before the wind,
Halyards, sheets, and braces mind.
When the wind's before the rain,
Soon you may make sail again.
(Squalls.)
Evening red and morning gray,
Are certain signs of a fine day.
June, too soon; July stand by;
August, lookout you must.
September, remember,
October all over.
(Hurricanes.)

A GLIMPSE OF OCEAN

BY FRANCIS H. McMAHON

Down from the crest of one great oak
  That crowned the ridge of Darien,
Frank Drake, the English sailor, spoke
  In fierce desire to his men,
    "By God," quoth he,
    "I'll sail that sea
    Before I come to die."

No storm that howls around the Horn
  Might turn his ship from that high quest,
And his departing soul was borne
  Triumphant through the purple west.
    The Golden Hind
    Obeyed his mind
    Before he came to die.

Each man is kind to Francis Drake,
  Whose spirit leaps to meet the spray
When he beholds white surges break
  Across the ledges far away,
    And prays that he
    May know the sea
    Before he comes to die.

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THE LEAK

BY LINCOLN COLCORD

Those who have only voyaged across the Atlantic have no conception of what it means to face a no'theaster in a leaky old bark with the clamor of the pumps beating into your brain—ceaseless, urgent, diabolical. Here is a faithful picture that will make you sympathize with the men who go down to the sea in ships.

CLANGITY-CLANG! Clangity-clang! Clangity-clang! The incessant noise of the pumps drummed through the gale; aft, forward, below, on deck, it penetrated like the stroke of doom. Captain Blair hung to the weather rail and listened to the sound. Clangity-clang! Clangity-clang! Clangity-clang! How long would she last? Another week? Another day?

The wind howled overhead in the rigging; the old bark staggered with a stiff, unwieldy motion, wallowing like a log in the wicked Gulf Stream sea. Underfoot the captain felt her distress. She was fighting a good fight; but she was old. The spirit had gone from her—the youth, the energy, the power. And then this terrible cargo—niter from Pisagua, heavy as lead! It bore down massively within her hull; from skin and between decks, the bags of niter rose pyramidally, free of the sides; by now the cargo had consolidated into two rigid, rocklike lumps, that threatened to tear her open as she wrenched from crest to trough of the sea. The strain would have been frightful upon any ship. And she was old.

Captain Blair had rounded the Horn with her; and now he was bringing her "on the coast" in the winter time. All the passage he had dreaded this last and worse encounter; but he had hardly anticipated so much ill luck. He had even hoped against hope that he might slip in from Hatteras to New York between storms. There were more reasons than one this time why he prayed for a favorable slant. He had to get in quickly; his wife lay sick in bed down below.

Clangity-clang! Clangity-clang! Clangity-clang!

He left the rail and paced the deck fiercely buffeted by spray and rain as he faced the wind, blown bodily aft as he turned his back to it. The gale was growing colder; it showed signs of snow. To and fro he struggled, thoughts leaping in his brain like fire.

A week now—a week of constant northeast gale! Cold and wet, with chafed wrists and raw face, he had paced his little corner of the quarter-deck day after day, until he had forgotten that he owned such a thing as a body. He had scarcely slept for forty-eight hours. And all the while the bark had been hove-to on the port tack, drifting back across the Gulf Stream, steadily away from port! He dare not wear her around and head inshore. Hatteras lay in wait for him who defied that stretch of lee shore in a northeaster.

On the second day of the gale she had sprung a leak without warning. Since then they had stood at the pumps night and day. They were barely able to keep her free.

Clangity-clang! Always the incessant clangity-clang! Would it never stop? The clamor of the pumps had beaten its way into his brain; it vibrated behind every thought—ceaseless, urgent, diabolical. Why? Why? Why? He stopped short and shook his clenched hands into the teeth of the gale. Why were they so hard on him? What had he done? He must get in—couldn't they see? His wife was dying?

The mate came aft and shouted in his ear: "I'm afraid it's gaining a little, sir!"

Captain Blair nodded. Words choked him; he drove his nails into the palms of his hands. A squall descended upon them, almost palpable in its fury.

"Got to keep on pumping, sir!" The mate's voice was snatched away as water is blown from the mouth of a pipe.

"For God's sake, shut up and go forward!"

The mate gazed at Captain Blair in perplexity, turned, and battled down the alleyway. A sea shook the old bark from stem to stern; the crest leaped aboard between the main and mizzen rigging, and swirled aft in a river of foam. The captain received it grimly, standing with feet spread apart, letting the water spurt to the tops of his rubber boots. He wondered if the men had been washed away from the pumps. When the lull came he listened. Clangity-clang! Clangity-clang! Clangity-clang!

What was she thinking about, down below—the little wife who had gone with him bravely on many long voyages, who had made life all that it was to him by her love and sacrifice? That heavy sea must have startled her. Perhaps she had heard the mate shouting to him. He must go down.

He threw back the sliding door of the companionway, stepped inside, and shut the cover as he descended. Darkness was coming on; the steward had lighted the lamp in the after cabin. Captain Blair glanced at the chart pegged out on the table, and swore below his breath. For three days he had not seen the sun. And what was the use of a chart if they were never to get anywhere?

A weak voice spoke from the room abaft the cabin. "Is that you, Bert? What is it? Oh, what is it now!"

He went in with his oilskin coat dripping. The room looked cheerless; the air was close, chilly, full of the depression of sickness. In the shadow of the bunk his wife lay checked off with pillows. She turned her face as he entered and attempted a pathetic smile.

"Has anything happened, dear?" she asked again fearfully.

"No—nothing," he answered, taking the hand that she stretched out over the bunk edge. "I just came down to see how you were."

"My boy! Oh, how cold your hands are! Give me the other—let me warm them."

"They only seem cold to you, dear."

"I was frightened! I heard some one shout—and then that awful sea!"

"It sounds worse than it is, you know, down here. That wasn't much, really. I think the gale is nearly over."

"I hope so. Is she still leaking?"

"Not so badly now, dear."

"Then everything is better!"

"Everything but you. How are you feeling to-night, girlie?"

She pressed his cold hands. "It pains a little—when she pitches. It must be very rough, isn't it?"

He choked, and suddenly bowed his wet face above the bunk.

"My poor boy!" She stroked his cheek, half crying. "You mustn't worry about me. I'm all right! You've got the responsibility for the ship on your shoulders."

He sank beside the bunk; he did not dare to speak. The ship on his shoulders? More than that! More than that! And she knew—was trying to make it lighter.

Another sea breached the vessel, and his wife clung to him in terror till it had passed over. He could feel what was going on above; his sailor instinct told him that the old bark was hard pressed. Again he listened; and again in the brief quiet the pumps drummed on, like a heart palpitating before death. Clangity-clang! Clangity-clang! Clangity-clang!

II.

Should he put back to Bermuda? The question pursued him about decks; it faced him in the darkness at every turn. Should he keep on fighting? Should he give in? What should he do?

He knew what it meant to put back. They would

rob him of the bark in Bermuda; they lived on disabled vessels, like vultures in the wake of an army. The cargo would have to be unloaded, reshipped; the bark would have to be repaired. All this would cost more than she was worth. He owned a quarter of her himself; it represented twenty hard years of following the sea. How could he afford to lose it? Where would he begin anew? And then there was his duty to the other owners, his duty as a sailor to get her in, if possible.

How much would these things weigh, if his wife died? The thought lashed him like a whip. Hidden by the night, drowned by the roar of the storm, he cried out like a beast and beat the rail with his fists. What should he do? Were there capable doctors in Bermuda? Would it avail anything in the end to put back? He knew vaguely that some serious operation would be necessary to save his wife.

The past week stood before him—day after day of indecision, while he hoped for a change—all wasted time now, gone forever. He was a sailor, a man of duty; his training had been to put duty first and sentiment last. He began to think that this was all wrong. Experience, conviction, the very creed of a hard life, was going by the board. What could it possibly matter—success, reputation, courage, power? His wife was dying!

And yet he had kept on; he still wanted to keep on. It must be right—he felt it so strongly. It was a test; it was the same old fight in a new guise—harder this time, with a keener attack, with a deeper thrust. His wife! They had touched him vitally. They were unfair!

"No, no!" he cried aloud, out of a desperate heart. "I can't put back! I'll fight—like the old bark—as long as I'm able!"

He went below at midnight and found his wife asleep. For a long while he stood beside the bunk, watching her pallid face—thinking. Was he being fair to her? Ah, but she understood!

Then he took up the watch on deck again; there was no sleep for him. He clung to the weather rail, and peered to windward as if trying to fathom the reaches of the storm. The gale howled in his ears; a huge wave lifted its white shoulder level with his eyes, flashing weirdly against the solid blackness; he made out nothing more. What should he do? What should he do?

III.

In the early morning the storm broke unexpectedly. The wind jumped into the northwest, the vessel headed up, and in an hour the sea had begun to go down. As it grew calmer the seams of the old bark tightened, and they were able to let up a little on the pumps. They made sail at once; voices rang out, a cheerful activity awoke on the storm-swept deck. The sun burst forth soon after dawn, and at eight o'clock Captain Blair got a clear altitude for the first time in seven days.

He ran below often during the forenoon to speak with his wife. The change of weather was like a breath of new life to her. She lay propped up in the bunk, feasting her eyes on the sunlight that streamed through her open window. The pain was easier to bear; she allowed herself to hope again—if the ship would only remain quiet. It seemed to her that she could not have lived through another day of tossing storm.

At noon she heard Captain Blair come below to work up his "sight." Ordinarily she helped her husband at this duty, looking up logarithms, bending with him above the table while he pricked off the latitude and longitude.

"Bring in the chart and show me where we are," she called.

He held it upright for her and pointed out the little circle that marked their position. "Not as bad as I feared," he said. "The Gulf Stream set us north. I thought we must be in it."

"We'll have to beat up, then, if this wind holds?"

He nodded, proud of her knowledge.

"It *must* hold!" she cried. "Of course it will hold! A clearing-off wind—it ought to blow for weeks!"

"Yes, dear. We're going to get in now!" She did not see the old hunted expression in his eyes.

He bent down to kiss her. She was trying to speak.

"What is it, dear?"

"Hurry, boy! Oh, hurry!"

A broken cry escaped him. "I'll take the masts out of her! I'll get in some way! My poor little girl——"

As the sun went down that afternoon Captain Blair stopped by the weather rail and scanned the heavens. The west glowed with pale yellow, the sea had become quite smooth, the bark heeled sharply to a stiff breeze. He gazed at the placid yellow sunset in bitterness of heart. It seemed so perfect, so beautiful; and yet, according to every sign he knew, it was false and ominous. He hated a Nature which could be guilty of such treachery.

The mate came up beside him, full of the good luck. "This is something like living, cap!" he exclaimed. "I can almost see the old statue up the bay."

Captain Blair shook his head. "It won't last!" he answered sharply.

"Why, cap'n, there isn't a cloud in the sky!"

"Never mind—I've seen it before. The wind didn't go around right—it backed into the nor'west. It's got too much northerly in it now. I'll give us one day of clear weather; to-morrow we have a change."

The mate went away, disappointed, and Captain Blair waited alone to see the last of the sun. This

was better than the storm, at any rate, and he gave thanks for it; but he had come "on the coast" too many times to build castles in the air. He had an even chance of getting in—that was all.

"I'm glad I didn't put back, though!" he said to himself. "I'm glad I decided before the gale broke! Perhaps this will be my reward."

That night a wide, luminous ring encircled the moon. Three bright stars twinkled within its circumference. On the following day the northwest wind died and a gray film of clouds spread over the sky. A faint breeze sprang up from the eastward—a raw wind, carrying a hint of snow. Still the sea was smooth. For two days and two nights this strange state of the weather continued. They kept on, heading diagonally in for New York, sailing by dead reckoning. On the morning of the third day they picked up the edge of soundings with the deep-sea lead, and knew that they were within a hundred miles of port.

IV.

The weather that morning looked very threatening. The haze overhead had grown thicker, as if closing in about them; the wind moaned in the rigging with an insistent note; the swell had a new lift, a menace of latent strength. The dreaded storm was near at hand!

Only a sailor can know the agony of Captain Blair's mind as he paced the quarter-deck and felt the powers of the ocean gathering against him. He weighed his chances over item by item; so many things had to be taken into account. Caught by a northeaster in the angle of Long Island and the Jersey coast, he could not hope for deliverance or mercy. A strong ship might be driven to sea again; but he dare not carry sail too hard on the old bark. Dismasted! The thought made him physically sick. No—if the storm came on with a rush he would have to heave her to. And then, suppose she was not able to scratch by the corner? The alternative was to fetch up on a lee shore—to die.

His only hope lay in picking up a towboat. Often he had met them a hundred miles at sea. They were always cruising about. He remembered one time when he had refused a tow until he was abreast Scotland Lightship. He had saved a few dollars then; now he would sell his soul for the same chance.

Noon passed, and still he headed inshore under shortened sail. How long could he tempt Providence? How long? How long? Another hour would turn the scales; by that time he would either have to get in or lose the ship on the Jersey coast. The storm was making every minute. He searched the horizon for a trail of smoke. Where were all the towboats? Where were the pilot boats? Were they to be kept outside after all?

He saw the coast to leeward in his mind's eye; again he went over his courses, figuring the least margin of safety. If the gale came from the northeast and he wore around on the port tack, he ought to slide off between southeast and south-southeast by driving the bark a little. That would open up the leak again. It would probably open, anyway. But worse than this, the wind could not be trusted; often it drew in from east-northeast, or even due east, around the end of Long Island. They were lost already if it came from due east!

He stopped short, facing the truth. Luck was against him! He need hope for no tugboat; he felt in his bones that they would not be allowed to get in. The air thickened to leeward; a section of horizon disappeared behind a white veil. Snow was coming up the wind! Inch by inch the horizon vanished, swallowed by the approaching terror. In ten minutes the face of the sea would be hidden. And still no tug in sight.

"Land ahead!" sang out a voice forward.

Captain Blair whirled about, uttering a savage oath. "Fire Island! It doesn't matter now!"

He had made up his mind. Night and a snowstorm were upon them; and he had put the old bark into the very jaws of death already. Time to finish playing and get to work—time to tear out hope from the heart—time to do what had to be done—time to forget what might have been!

"Wear ship!" His voice rang out above the rising gale. "Mr. Forsyth, lower the spanker down on deck. Get your men on the weather braces. Let her run off a little, now."

Almost in! Captain Blair rested his hands on the stern rail and gazed at the low sandy coast of Fire Island, a fading line on the northern horizon. Almost in! A few flakes of snow drove past the stern; an opaque cloud crept stealthily toward them on the water. The captain's eyes fell to the wake, watching the old bark gather headway on the port tack. When he looked up, the land had been obliterated. He was not to see it again for many days.

Back into the storm, into the open Atlantic, across the Gulf Stream—back to the old fight—back to the endless exile—back to the reproach of failure—back to the anguish and despair of dying eyes! "Hurry! Oh, hurry!" she had begged him. Hurry away! Hurry offshore! Drive — drive — drive! Pound—pound—pound! Claw to windward! Race through the snow! Strain on—surge on! Howl, wind! Laugh, death! Open, open, seams! Back to the pumps! Back to sea—and almost in!

He entered his wife's room quietly and took her hand without speaking. For a long moment they gazed at each other, a world of pain and love in their eyes.

"I heard," she said at last.

Something gave way within his brain; he sank on

his knees beside the bunk, sobbing like a child. "I had to do it! I had to do it! I promised to get you in to-day!"

"Never mind, my boy. Perhaps we'll get in to-morrow."

"No! No! No! Never! Never! We'll never get in!"

"You mustn't talk that way!"

"Oh, I can't stand it! This is too much!"

"You must, my boy. Be brave—for my sake!"

"But you——" He did not dare to speak the thought.

"Don't think of me. I've been feeling so much better to-day. Think only of the ship."

"My dear! I promised to get you in!"

"Boy, don't I know that you're doing the best you can? That is enough for me."

Hour after hour he sat in the gloomy cabin, gripping the arms of the chair with both hands, staring straight ahead. What was the use of going on deck? They were only driving through the night—driving away. He could feel the condition of the ship by her plunges; when it got too bad he would go up and take in sail.

The mate came to the forward-cabin door, knocked, and stuck in his head. He was covered with ice and snow; his breath was frozen to his beard.

"She's leaking badly again, sir," he said. "Two feet——"

"Pump, then!"

The door closed; the mate stamped away through the forward cabin. A squall struck the vessel; she careened wildly, the voices of her hull shrieking under the strain. Captain Blair sat on, motionless, unwinking. He saw into the future plainly now. God was indeed hard. Why? Why? Why? What had *he* done? The wind lulled, and a familiar noise smote his ears. It throbbed through the ship like the pulsing of a frantic heart. Clangity-clang! Clangity-clang! Clangity-clang!

V.

It was on a night two weeks later that the old bark crept past the lights of Atlantic City. The northwest wind had blown itself away, the sea was level as a floor. A high peace brooded on the world; out of a guileless sky the serene stars looked down as if in mockery. The old bark crept on—deep, ice-covered, in sore distress. Her ropes were frozen in the sheaves; her decks were piled with snow. In the great stillness her pumps clanged fiercely, still flinging their challenge to an encroaching sea.

Captain Blair watched the brilliant line of lights along the western horizon. They were happy in there; they were laughing, dancing, carousing! They had been at it when he wore ship off Fire Island, two weeks before! Perhaps they had enjoyed the snow, glad of a diversion. What did they care? What did they feel? What did they know? Did they ever look seaward from the board walk? Did they ever look beyond their own miserable, thoughtless lives? He cursed them—he hated them!

A rare smell of land filled his nostrils; even in winter the earth sends out a message to her sons at sea. Ah—at last! His wife still lingered between life and death. Would she be spared to him through what was yet to come?

He knew that he would get in this time. Nothing could stop him. The elements had done their worst—and he had won! He breathed the token of it in that crisp, sweet air. Memories came to him as he paced the deck—retrospects of home, of dear faces, of simple boyhood scenes; visions of trees and flowers, of shores and streams. Then in a flash his thoughts leaped forward, into the recent gale. He saw again the menace of the angry Atlantic, he felt once more the struggle of the old bark, he heard forever the pumps pounding above the noise of the storm. The men had sobbed with cold as they bent to the handles. They were still pumping forward. Clangity-clang! Clangity-clang! Clangity-clang! That sound would haunt him to the grave. But they had weathered the storm, they had won——

Would his wife live—even now, even now?

The mate came running aft. "Cap'n! cap'n! Steamer ahead! Red and green lights, with a white above!"

Captain Blair's heart leaped. Could it be a tug, so far outside in the night? He waited five minutes; the lights were almost upon them, showing both red and green. A whistle shrieked—the sweetest note that ever greeted man's ears. It was a tugboat, making directly for the bark!

"Stop the pumps, there!" cried the captain. "It never'll do to let him know that we're leaking."

She rounded to on the bark's weather quarter, with a loud hissing of steam. A far-away hail came across the water.

"Ship ahoy! What ship is that?"

"Bark *Adalade*, from Pisagua, bound to New York!"

"Do you want a tow?"

"How much will you take me in for?"

"One hundred and fifty dollars!"

Captain Blair ground his teeth. "Fifty dollars too much!" he said to himself. "Never mind—I'll pay it myself. I can't wait!" He funneled his hands to shout. "One hundred and fifty goes! Hook onto us!"

The tug veered closer to the quarter.

"What kind of a passage have you had, Cap'n Blair?"

"Why, hello, Dan Reilly, is that you? Where were all you fellows two weeks ago?"

"Were you off here then?"

A lump of anger rose in Captain Blair's throat. Was he off here then? "I've been twenty-five days from Hatteras to New York!" he shouted furiously. "My wife's been sick all the time. So get us in as quick as God will let you!"

Under the high, clear stars, across the glasslike water, the old bark trailed in from sea. The pumps clanged on; the ropes lay about the deck in endless confusion. Aloft, a few men worked slowly, furling the frozen sails. In past the lightships, in past the winking eye of Navesink—boarded by the pilot—into the old ship channel, in past the Romer bug light, in past the range lights on the Hook, in past Coney Island—in, in from sea! The glow of the great city filled the north; the loom of the land pressed closer in the darkness; the lights multiplied, shifted, approached—the lights of port! Life touched them once more; their ears caught the faint, ghostly murmur of the awakening land. Over the waste astern, dawn broke in a cloudless sky.

They saw the city—the towering, distant buildings, the well-remembered sweep of Brooklyn Bridge. They saw the statue—calm, aloof, indifferent to sun or storm, unmoved by life or death. They saw the land to port and starboard—the hills of Staten Island, the gleaming snow fields, the houses rising roof on roof, the spires, the forts, the broad harbor, the swift ferries, the bustling tugs! Ah, dear New York! How often have you smiled on homing seamen; how much you have meant to them in the years that are gone! Generation after generation of sailor hearts have longed for you; ship upon ship has battled at your portals; day and night you have welcomed them home. Only the sailor knows the measure of your beauty, the depth of your love and peace. Only the sailor, in from sea.

He sat in the after cabin, waiting. In the silence of the resting ship, the pumps clanged loudly, monotonously. He gripped the arms of the chair with both hands; his soul shrank before the greatest fear that he had ever known. The door behind him opened and closed, as the doctor stepped into the cabin.

"What are the chances, doctor?"

"I can't tell. She must be taken to a hospital at once."

"I've kept the towboat alongside. Will you see to the business, doctor? I'll go with you, but you must take charge. I don't know much about hospitals—and I've been through a hard time, sir."

VI.

Late that night Captain Blair came off to the bark in a shore boat, and climbed up the side ladder. The mate met him at the rail.

"What news, cap'n?" he asked hesitatingly.

"She pulled through, Mr. Forsyth!"

"Thank God, sir!"

Captain Blair turned away with tears in his eyes. He could not trust himself to speak further.

Down below a dim light burned above the chart table. He stopped and looked around, half dazed. That hour in the hospital came back to him—an hour in hell. To think of her, unconscious, perhaps dying—and nothing that he could do! But he had seen her since—she had known him.

What was it that seemed so strange about the vessel? He caught himself listening. Silence. The pumps were still! She had stopped leaking.

He went into his wife's room. The bed had been made; the air of sickness was gone. But he could never forget! Unutterable thoughts besieged him—memories of pain beyond words. Storm and disappointment and torture and fear. What a life to give a woman! What a life for a man himself to live! They had won, this time—but, oh, the cost!

He faced her picture. The brave eyes seemed to chide him. If she were here now, what would she say? He knew so well. "Boy, you mustn't talk that way!" He knelt beside the bunk and stretched his arms across the empty bed. "God forgive me!" he cried from a torn heart. "She will live! She will live!"

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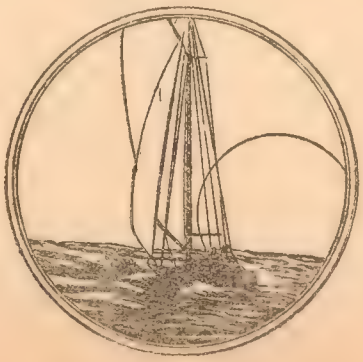

THE MARE AND THE MOTOR

BY JOSEPH C. LINCOLN

A Cape Cod story may have mostly to do with huckleberries, cranberries, truck wagons and other land craft, yet sailormen will recognize it as a sea story. It is not to say quite that Cape Cod folks — a lovable people — are amphibians, though the Atlantic is in their marrow from birth, so to say. To Mr. Lincoln, more than to any one since the Mayflower *anchored at Provincetown, is due the fame which attaches to Cape Cod's people. He began with "Captain Eri" years ago and has delighted millions of readers since.*

IN order to understand this story there are a few points of information concerning "Lonesome Huckleberries" with which you ought to be acquainted. First, his nationality: Captain Jonadab Wixon used to say that Lonesome was "a little of everything, like a picked-up dinner; principally Eyetalian and Portygee, I cal'late, with a streak of Gay Head Injun." Second, his name: To quote from the captain again, "His reel name's long enough to touch bottom in the ship channel at high tide, so folks nater'lly got to callin' him 'Huckleberries,' 'cause he peddles them kind of fruit in summer. Then he mopes round so, with nary a smile on his face, that it seemed jest right to tack on the 'Lonesome.' So 'Lonesome Huckleberries' he's been for the past ten year." Add to these items the fact that he lived in a patchwork shanty on the end of a sandspit six miles from Wellmouth Port, that he was deaf and dumb, that he drove a liver-colored, balky mare that no one but himself and his daughter "Becky" could handle, that he had a fondness for bad rum, and a wicked temper that had twice landed him in the village lockup, and you have a fair idea of the personality of Lonesome Huckleberries. And, oh, yes! his decoy ducks.

He was a great gunner alongshore, and owned a flock of live decoys for which he had refused bids as high as fifteen dollars each. There, now I think you are in position to appreciate the yarn that Mr. Barzilla Wingate told me as we sat in the "Lovers' Nest," the summerhouse on the bluff by the Old Home House, and watched the *Greased Lightning*, Peter Brown's smart little motor launch, swinging at her moorings below.

"Them Todds," observed Barzilla, "had got on my nerves. 'Twas Peter's ad that brought 'em down here. You see, 'twas 'long toward the end of the season, at the OldHome House, and Brown had been advertisin' in the New York and Boston papers to 'bag the leftovers,' as he called it. Besides the reg'-

lar hogwash about the 'breath of old ocean' and the 'simple, cleanly livin' of the bygone days we dream about,' there was some new froth concernin' huntin' and fishin'. You'd think the wild geese roosted on the flagpole nights, and the bluefish clogged up the bay so's you could walk on their back fins without wettin' your feet—that is, if you wore rubbers and trod light.

"'There!' says Peter T., wavin' the advertisement and crowin' gladsome; 'they'll take to that like your temp'rance aunt to brandy coughdrops. We'll have to put up barbed wire to keep 'em off.'

"'Humph!' grunts Cap'n Jonadab. 'Anybody but a born fool'll know there ain't any shootin' down here this time of year.'

"Peter looked at him sorrowful. 'Pop,' says he, 'did you ever hear that Solomon answered a summer hotel ad? This ain't a Chautauqua; this is the Old Home House, and its motto is: "There's a new sucker born every minute, and there's twenty-four hours in a day." You set back and count the clock ticks.'

"Well, that's 'bout all we had to do. We got boarders enough from that ridic'lous advertisement to fill every spare room we had, includin' Jonadab's and mine. Me and the cap'n had to bunk in the barn loft; but there was some satisfaction in that—it give us an excuse to git away from the 'sports' in the smokin' room.

"The Todds was part of the haul. He was a little dried-up man, single, and a minister. Nigh's I could find out, he'd given up preachin' by the request of the doctor and his last congregation. He had a notion that he was a mighty hunter before the Lord, like Nimrod in the Bible, and he'd come to the Old Home to bag a few gross of geese and ducks.

"His sister was an old maid, and slim, neither of which failin's was from ch'ice, I cal'late. She wore eyeglasses and a veil to 'preserve her complexion,' and her idee seemed to be that native Cape Coders lived in trees and et coconuts. She called 'em 'barbarians, utter barbarians.' Whenever she piped 'James!' her brother had to drop everything and report on deck. She was skipper of the Todd craft.

"Well, them Todds was what Peter T. called 'the limit, and a chip or two over.' The other would-be gunners and fishermen were satisfied to slam shot after sandpeeps, or hook a stray sculpin or a hake. But t'wa'n't so with Brother James Todd and Sister Clarissa. 'Ducks' it was in the advertisin', and nothin' *but* ducks they wanted. Clarissa, she commenced to hint middlin' p'inted concernin' fraud.

"Fin'lly we lost patience, and Peter T., he said they'd got to be quieted somehow, or he'd do some shootin' on his own hook; said too much toddy was givin' him the 'D. T.'s.' Then I suggested takin' 'em down the beach somewheres on the chance of seein' a stray coot or loon or somethin'—*anything* that could be shot at. Jonadab and Peter agreed 'twas a good plan, and we matched to see who'd be guide. And I got stuck, of course; my luck again.

"So the next mornin' we started, me and the Reverend James and Clarissa, in the *Greased Lightnin'*. Fust part of the trip that Todd man done nothin' but ask questions about the launch; I had to show him how to start it and steer it, and the land knows what all. Clarissa set around doin' the heavy contemptuous and turnin' up her nose at creation gin'rally. It must have its drawbacks, this roostin' so fur above the common flock; seems to me I'd be thinkin' all the time of the bump that was due me if I got shoved off the perch.

"Well, by and by Lonesome Huckleberries' shanty hove in sight, and I was glad to see it, although I had to answer a million more questions about Lonesome and his history. When we struck the beach, Clarissa, she took her paint box and umbrella and moskeeter 'intment, and the rest of her cargo, and went off by herself to 'sketch.' She was great on 'sketchin',' and the way she'd use up good paint and spile nice clean paper was a sinful waste. Afore she went, she give me three fathom of sailin' orders concernin' takin' care of 'James.' You'd think he was about four year old; made me feel like a hired nuss.

"Well, James and me went perusin' up and down that beach in the blazin' sun lookin' for somethin' to shoot. We went 'way beyond Lonesome's shanty, but there wa'n't nobody to home. Lonesome himself, it turned out afterward, was up to the village with his horse and wagon, and his daughter Becky was over in the woods on the mainland berryin'. Todd was a cheerful talker, but limited. His favorite remark was: 'Oh, I say, my deah man.' That's what he kept callin' me, 'my deah man.' Now, my name ain't exactly a Claude de Montmorency for prettiness, but 'Barzilla' 'll fetch *me* alongside a good deal quicker'n 'my deah man,' I'll tell you that.

"We frogged it up and down all the forenoon, but didn't git a shot at nothin' but one stray 'squawk' that had come over from the Cedar Swamp. I told James 'twas a canvasback, and he blazed away at it, but missed it by three fathom, as might have been expected.

"Fin'lly my game leg—rheumatiz, you understand—begun to give out. So I flops down in the shade of a sand bank to rest, and the reverend goes pokin' off by himself.

"I cal'late I must have fell asleep, for when I looked at my watch it was close to one o'clock, and time for us to be gittin' back to the port. I got up and stretched and took an observation, but further'n Clarissa's umbrella on the skyline, I didn't see anything stirrin'. Brother James wa'n't visible, but I jedged he was within hailin' distance. You can't see very fur on that point, there's too many sand hills and hummocks.

"I started over toward the *Greased Lightnin'*. I'd gone a little ways, and was down in a gully between

two big hummocks, when 'Bang! bang!' goes both barrels of a shotgun, and that Todd critter busts out hollerin' like all possessed.

"'Horray!' he squeals, in that speaky voice of his 'Hooray! I've got 'em! I've got 'em!'

"Thinks I, 'What in the nation does that lunatic cal'late he's shot?' And I left my own gun layin' where 'twas and piled up over the edge of that sand bank like a cat over a fence. And then I see a sight.

"There was James, hoppin' up and down in the beach grass, squealin' like a Guinea hen with a sore throat, and wavin' his gun with one wing—arm, I mean—and there in front of him, in the foam at the edge of the surf, was two ducks as dead as Nebuchadnezzar—two of Lonesome Huckleberries' best decoy ducks—ducks he'd tamed and trained, and thought more of than anything else in this world—except rum, maybe—and the rest of the flock was diggin' up the beach for home as if they'd been telegraphed for, and squawkin' 'Fire!' and 'Bloody murder!'

"Well, my mind was in a kind of various state, as you might say, for a minute. 'Course, I'd known about Lonesome's ownin' them decoys—told Todd about 'em, too—but I hadn't seen 'em nowhere alongshore, and I sort of cal'lated they was locked up in Lonesome's hen house, that bein' his usual way when he went to town. I s'pose likely they'd been feedin' among the beach grass somewheres out of sight, but I don't know for sartin to this day. And I didn't stop to reason it out then, neither. As Scriptur' or George Washin'ton or somebody says, 'twas a condition, not a theory,' I was afoul of.

"'I've got 'em!' hollers Todd, grinnin' till I thought he'd swaller his own ears. 'I shot 'em all myself!'

"'You everlastin'——' I begun, but I didn't git any further. There was a rattlin' noise behind me, and I turned, to see Lonesome Huckleberries himself, settin' on the edge of his old truck wagon and glarin' over the hammer head of that balky mare of his straight at Brother Todd and the dead decoys.

"For a minute there was a kind of tableau, like them they have at church fairs—all four of us, includin' the mare, keepin' still, like we was frozen. But 'twas only for a minute. Then it turned into the liveliest movin' picture that ever *I* see. Lonesome couldn't swear—bein' a dummy—but if ever a man got profane with his eyes, he did right then. Next thing I knew he tossed both hands into the air, clawed two handfuls out of the atmosphere, reached down into the cart, grabbed a pitchfork, and piled out of that wagon and after Todd. There was murder comin' and I could see it.

"'Run, you loon!' I hollers, desp'rate.

"James didn't wait for any advice. He didn't know what he'd done, I cal'late, but he jedged 'twas his move. He dropped his gun and putted down the shore like a wild man, with Lonesome after him. I tried to foller, but my rheumatiz was too big a handicap; all I could do was yell.

"You never'd have picked out Todd for a sprinter—not to look at him, you wouldn't—but if he didn't beat the record for his class jest then I'll eat my sou'wester. He fairly flew, but Lonesome split tacks with him every time, and kept to wind'ard, into the bargain. Where they went out sight amongst the sand hills 'twas anybody's race.

"I was scart. I knew what Lonesome's temper was, 'specially when it had been iled with some Wellmouth Port no-license rum. He'd been took up once for ha'f killin' some boys that tormented him, and I figgered if he got within pitchfork distance of the Todd critter he'd make him the leakiest divine that ever picked a text. I commenced to hobble back after my gun. It looked bad to me.

"But I'd forgot Sister Clarissa. 'Fore I'd limped fur I heard her callin' to me.

"'Mr. Wingate,' says she, 'git in here at once.'

"There she was, settin' on the seat of Lonesome's wagon, holdin' the reins and as cool as a white frost in October.

"'Git in at once,' says she. I jedged 'twas good advice, and took it.

"'Proceed,' says she to the mare. 'Git dap!' says I, and we started. When we rounded the sand hill we see the race in the distance. Lonesome had gained a p'int or two, and Todd wa'n't more'n four pitchforks in the lead.

"'Make for the launch!' I whooped between my hands.

"The parson heard me and come about and broke for the shore. The *Greased Lightnin'* had swung out about the length of her anchor rope, and the water wa'n't deep. Todd splashed in to his waist and climbed aboard. He cut the ridin' jest as Lonesome reached tide mark. James, he sees it's a close call, and he shins back to the engine, reachin' it exactly at the time when the gent with the pitchfork laid hands on the rail. Then the parson throws over the switch—I'd shown him how, you remember—and gives the startin' wheel a full turn.

"Well, you know the *Greased Lightnin'?* She don't linger to say farewell, not any to speak of, she don't. And this time she jumped like the cat that lit on the hot stove. Lonesome, bein' balanced with his knees on the rail, pitches headfust into the cockpit. Todd, jumpin' out of his way, falls overboard backward. Next thing anybody knew, the launch was scootin' for blue water like a streak of what she was named for, and the huntin' chaplain was churnin' up foam like a mill wheel.

"I yelled more orders than second mate on a coaster. Todd bubbled and bellered. Lonesome hung on to the rail of the cockpit and let his hair stand up to grow. Nobody was cool but Clarissa, and she was an iceberg. She had her good p'ints, that old maid did, drat her!

"'James,' she calls, 'git out of that water this

minute and come here! This instant, mind!'

"James minded. He paddled ashore and hopped, drippin' like a dishcloth, alongside the truck wagon.

"'Git in!' orders Skipper Clarissa. He done it. 'Now,' says the lady, passin' the reins over to me, 'drive us home, Mr. Wingate, before that intoxicated lunatic can catch us.'

"It seemed about the only thing to do. I knew 'twas no use explainin' to Lonesome for an hour or more yit, even if you can talk finger signs, which part of my college trainin' has been neglected. 'Twas murder he wanted at the present time. I had some sort of a foggy notion that I'd drive along, pick up the guns, and then git the Todds over to the hotel, afterward comin' back to git the launch and pay damages to Huckleberries. I cal'lated he'd be more reasonable by that time.

"But the mare had made other arrangements. When I slapped her with the end of the reins she took the bit in her teeth and commenced to gallop. I hollered 'Whoa!' and 'Heave to!' and 'Belay!' and everything else I could think of, but she never took in a reef. We bumped over hummocks and ridges, and every time we done it we spilled somethin' out of that wagon. Fust 'twas a lot of huckleberry pails, then a basket of groceries and such, then a tin pan with some potatoes in it, then a jug done up in a blanket. We was heavin' cargo overboard like a leaky ship in a typhoon. Out of the tail of my eye I see Lonesome, well out to sea, headin' the *Greased Lightnin'* for the beach.

"Clarissa put in the time soothin' James, who had a serious case of the scart-to-deaths, and callin' me an 'utter barbarian' for drivin' so fast. Lucky for all hands, she had to hold on tight to keep from bein' jounced out, 'long with the rest of movables, so she couldn't take the reins. As for me, I wa'n't payin' much attention to her—'twas the 'Cut-Through' that was disturbin' *my* mind.

"When you drive down to Lonesome P'int you have to ford the 'Cut-Through.' It's a strip of water between the bay and the ocean, and t'ain't very wide nor deep at low tide. But the tide was comin' in now, and, more'n that, the mare wa'n't headed for the ford. She was cuttin' cross-lots on her own hook, and wouldn't answer the helm.

"Well, we struck that 'Cut-Through' about a hundred yards east of the ford, and in two shakes we was hub deep in salt water. 'Fore the Todds could do anything but holler the wagon was afloat and the mare was all but swimmin'. But she kept right on. Bless her, you *couldn't* stop her!

"We crossed the first channel and come out on a flat where 'twasn't more'n two foot deep then. I commenced to feel better. There was another channel ahead of us, but I figured we'd navigate that same as we had the first one. And then the most outrageous thing happened.

"If you'll b'lieve it, that pesky mare balked and wouldn't stir another step.

"And there we was! I punched and kicked and hollered, but all that stubborn horse would do was lay her ears back flat and snarl up her lip and look round at us, much as to say: 'Now, then, you land sharks, I've got you between wind and water!' And I swan to man if it didn't look like she had!

"'Drive on!' says Clarissa, pretty average vinegary. 'Haven't you made trouble enough for us already, you dreadful man? Drive on!'

"Hadn't *I* made trouble enough! What do you think of that?

"'You want to drown us!' says Miss Todd, continuin' her chatty remarks. 'I see it all! It's a plot between you and that murderer. I give you warnin'; if we reach the hotel, my brother and I will commence suit for damages.'

"My temper's fairly long-sufferin,' but 'twas ravelin' some by this time.

"'Commence suit!' I says. 'I don't care *what* you commence, if you'll commence to keep quiet now!' And then I give her a few p'ints as to what her brother had done, heavin' in some personal flatteries every once in a while for good measure.

"I'd about got to thirdly when James gives a screech and p'inted. And, by time! if there wa'n't Lonesome in the launch, headed right for us, and comin' a-b'lilin'! He'd run her along abreast of the beach and turned in at the upper end of the 'Cut-Through.'

"You never in your life heard such a row as there was in that wagon. Clarissa and me yellin' to Lonesome to keep off—forgittin' that he was stone deef and dumb—and James vowin' that he was goin' to be slaughtered in cold blood. And the *Greased Lightnin'* p'inted, jest so she'd split that cart amidships, and comin'—well, you know how she can go.

"She never budged until she was within ten foot of the flat, and then, jest as I was commencin' the third line of 'Now I lay me,' she sheered off and went past in a wide curve, with Lonesome steerin' with one hand and shakin' his pitchfork at Todd with t'other. And *such* faces as he made up! They'd have got him hung in any court in the world. He run up the 'Cut-Through' a little ways, and then come about, and back he comes again, never slackin' speed a mite, and runnin' close to the shoal as he could shave, and all the time goin' through the bloodiest kind of pantomimes. And past he goes, to wheel 'round and commence all over again.

"Thinks I, 'Why don't he ease up and lay us aboard? He's got all the weapons there is. Is he scart?'

"And then it come to me—the reason why. *He didn't know how to stop her.* He could steer fust rate, bein' used to sailboats, but an electric auto launch was a new deal for him, and he didn't understand her works. And he dasn't run her aground at the speed she was makin'; 'twould have finished her and, more'n likely, him, too.

"I don't s'pose there ever was another mess jest like it afore or sence. Here was us, stranded with a horse we couldn't make go, bein' chased by a feller who was run away with in a boat he couldn't stop!

"Just as I'd about give up hope, I heard somebody callin' from the beach behind us. I turned, and there was Becky Huckleberries, Lonesome's daughter. She had the dead decoys by the legs in one hand.

"'Hi!' says she.

"'Hi!' says I. 'How do you git this giraffe of yours under way?'

She held up the decoys.

"'Who kill-a dem ducks?' says she.

"I p'inted to the reverend. 'He did,' says I. And then I cal'late I must have had one of them things they call an inspiration. 'And he's willin' to pay for 'em,' I says.

"'Pay thirty-five dolla?' says she.

"'You bet!' says I.

"But I'd forgot Clarissa. She rose up in that waterlogged cart like a Statue of Liberty. 'Never!' says she. 'We will never submit to such extortion. We'll drown fust!'

"Becky heard her. She didn't look disapp'inted nor nothin'. Jest turned and began to walk up the beach. *'All* right,' says she; *goo'-by.'*

"The Todds stood it for a jiffy. Then James give in. 'I'll pay it!' he hollers. 'I'll pay it!'

"Even then Becky didn't smile. She jest came about again and walked back to the shore. Then she took up that tin pan and one of the potaters we'd jounced out of the cart.

"'Hi, Rosa!' she hollers. That mare turned her head and looked. And, for the first time sence she hove anchor on that flat, the critter unfurled her ears and h'isted 'em to the masthead.

"'Hi, Rosa!' says Becky again, and begun to pound the pan with the potater. And I give you my word that that mare started up, turned the wagon around nice as could be, and begun to swim ashore. When we got jest where the critter's legs touched bottom, Becky remarks: 'Whoa!'

"'Here!' I yells, 'what did you do that for?'

"'Pay thirty-five dolla *now*,' says she. She was bus'ness, that girl.

"Todd got his wallet from under hatches and counted out the thirty-five, keepin' one eye on Lonesome, who was swoopin' up and down in the launch lookin' as if he wanted to cut in, but dastn't. I tied the bills to my jackknife, to give 'em weight, and tossed the whole thing ashore. Becky, she counted the cash and stowed it away in her apron pocket.

"'*All* right,' says she. 'Hi, Rosa!' The potater and pan performance begun again, and Rosa picked up her hoofs and dragged us to dry land. And it sartinly felt good to the feet.

"'Say,' I says, 'Becky, it's none of my affairs, as I know of, but is that the way you start that horse of yours?'

"She said it was. And Rosa et the potater.

"Well, then Becky asked me how to stop the launch, and I told her. She made a lot of finger signs to Lonesome, and inside of five minutes the *Greased Lightnin'* was anchored in front of us. Old man Huckleberries was still hankerin' to interview Todd with the pitchfork, but Becky settled that all right. She jumped in front of him, and her eyes snapped and her feet stamped and her fingers flew. And 'twould have done you good to see her dad shrivel up and git humble. I always had thought that a woman wasn't much good as a boss of the roost unless she could use her tongue, but Becky showed me my mistake. Well, it's live and l'arn.

"Then Miss Huckleberries turned to us and smiled.

"'*All* right,' says she; '*goo'*-by.'

"Them Todds took the train for the city next mornin'. I drove 'em to the depot. James was kind of glum, but Clarissa talked for two. Her opinion of the Cape and Capers, 'specially me, was decided. The final blast was jest as she was climbin' the steps.

"'Of all the barbarians,' says she; 'utter, uncouth, murderin' barbarians in——'

"She stopped, thinkin' for a word, I s'pose. I didn't feel that I could improve on Becky Huckleberries' conversation much, so I says:

"'*All* right! *Goo'*-by!'"

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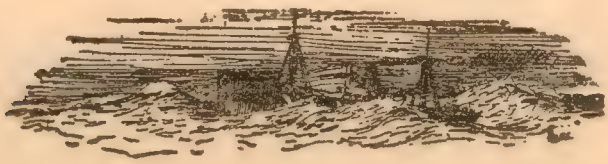


MAGIC OF THE SEA

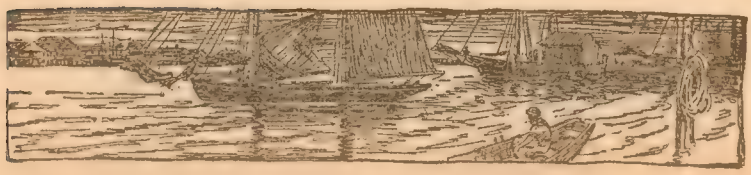
BY S. OMAR BARKER

Oh, I'd like to settle down in some quaint and quiet town,
Where the harbor fills with sails home from the sea,
There to watch, with peaceful eyes, homely hills and friendly skies,
And to hear the short waves lapping on the lea.

Just a little shanty there, and a friend or two to share
Memories of ventures when our hearts were young,
Just to watch the ships come home, just to smell the tang of foam,
And sometimes to hear a seaman's chantey sung.

Oh, I'm longing more and more, for a little place ashore,
Now that time has turned my life ship toward the West.
There's adventure on the sea—ah, its voice is sweet to me!
But the harbor's calm is calling me to rest.

Yet I know that some brave night, schooner sails would beckon white,
And the sea would whisper magic in its moan—
Oh, 'twould break an old man down, biding there within the town,
With his heart a-sail for seas it once had known!



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THE ISLE OF DOOM

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

Does punishment naturally follow crime, or was it merely a coincidence that the thieves in this remarkable story grounded on an island of quicksand? In any case, this is the sort of narrative that makes one think.

KENYON lived on the outer fringe. He knew there were big cities—knew in the same indefinite way that the child born and bred in the slums knows that there are big open spots in the world, where the air is free from grime and smoke. There are a lot like Jack Kenyon on the unbeaten tracks. They are the world's trekkers, watching where the dawn shafts spring from space, and praying God to let the world fill up slowly so that they may die without being crushed for breathing space.

He told me this story one night in Banjormassin in a small grogshop opposite a little Dutch chapel near the wharves, where the puffs of wind prowling up the Banjar advanced cautiously, seemingly afraid lest they might lose themselves in the dark alleyways where the stenches fought eternally.

The minister of the church was speaking of eternal rewards and punishments, and his vigorous assertions burrowed into the air like sound projectiles. The thick shawl of night tried to smother them, but they cut their way through, and seemed to gain an increased penetrating power from the opposition. One pictured them as tangible things, red-hot, whistling missiles hurled against moral turpitude, ripping away down through the Java Sea and smiting the ears of the ungodly.

Kenyon had been silent for quite a while, his eyes fixed on the bottom of his glass. The heavy air did not encourage an animated conversation, and I was not disposed to break the silence. Presently he spoke.

"He's right!" he cried. "By gosh, he's right!"

My mind immediately suggested that Kenyon's remark referred to the ministerial declamations

coming from the chapel, and I turned a listening ear to the sermon. The clergyman was repeating the Emersonian statement that crime and punishment grow on the one bough, and therefore come to the person who plucks the branch, and Kenyon shook his head as he listened.

"That's so!" he cried. "He's got the hang of things sure as eggs."

He turned on me with a quick movement that upset the glass, the liquor oozing slowly through the plaited Dyak mat that covered the table.

"Did I ever tell you the story of the *Queen Regent?*" he asked.

I shook my head, and Kenyon waited till the minister had rounded off his discourse with a broadside against sin that awakened the Malay bartender who was dozing in the corner.

"She ran into Port Darwin one day in eighty-nine," continued Kenyon, "the smartest seagoing yacht that ever heeled over before the trade. I was a boy working for 'Blackbirder' Benson, and the masts of the *Queen Regent* beckoned me like big white fingers. When I think of those masts I wonder why I didn't tell this story after it happened. It seems as if I had to go on that yacht; you wait and tell me what you think. It looks as if I was wanted as a witness to tell the thing over the world, yet I haven't spoken about it to a soul till to-night.

"I got a berth easy enough. The yacht was out of Liverpool, owned by an English baronet of the name of Sir Creswell Danersford, and she was on a cruise round the Marshall and Caroline groups. There were seven in the crew, including the captain and a deaf and dumb boy, who waited on the owner. Sir Creswell was a big, red-faced man, and just because his face was as broad as the war shield of a Kyan he tried to make it look broader by wearing side whiskers that stuck out like the hair of a Papuan belle.

"If I had been a man I might have been told something before we cleared Port Darwin, but I was only a boy at the time. That's why I had to sniff mystery for two days while we were beating across the Arafura. The five in the fo'c's'le—the mate, Fulton, camped there—talked of only one thing for those two days. They called that thing 'It.'

"We had the same brand of talk for breakfast, dinner, and supper. They were wishing all sorts of things about this 'It.' They were wishing the thing was lighter, handier, and more easily got at; and each of 'em had a spot in his eye where he reckoned he'd like to have the affair to keep him company.

"White, a cockney, voted for the Mile End Road; Fulton picked Suez as his choice; Beck had Glasgow in his eye; and the other two, Brennan and Camphin, wished that they had 'It' in a little kennel they knew of near the Liverpool docks. But they never said what the thing was. It was just 'It,' plain 'It,' and the talk got on my nerves.

"Was your mind ever that hungry to know the answer to a question that it fairly sprang upon the answer when it did come along? Mine was like that. It was ready to pounce on the slightest clew that came along, and on the second day the clew came. The deaf and dumb boy took ill, and the captain ordered me to clean up Sir Creswell's cabin. Then I saw 'It.' I knew the thing the moment I clapped eyes on it.

"I went back to the fo'c's'le and found White, Brennan, and Camphin sitting on a bunk and talking in whispers. I went across and sat near them. White was speaking, and, of course, 'It' was the topic.

"'I've just been dusting it,' I said when he stopped for a minute to get his breath.

"The three looked at me and then at each other. White started to whistle, but Camphin leaned over and gripped hold of my sleeve.

"'Where?' he asked.

"'In Sir Creswell's cabin,' I said, and I knew by the way he looked at me that I had solved the puzzle.

"The three of 'em tried to keep from questioning me, but they were so full up on that matter that they couldn't keep their curiosity in check. The deaf and dumb fellow couldn't tell them much because none of them knew the sign language, and they just fell upon me with half a hundred questions.

"I had struck 'It' all right. Their fancy conversational topic was a black safe in Sir Creswell's cabin—a big safe with the Danersford arms painted on it. There were two gold eagles holding double-edged swords in their claws, and underneath were the words *'Quantum vis.'* Say, what does that mean, anyhow?"

"I think it means, 'As much as you will,'" I answered.

"H'm," grunted Kenyon. "'As much as you will,' eh? That's funny. That bunch didn't know, and I've never asked anybody else. You see, I've never told this story before, but I should have done so. I know I should. I was sent on that yacht as a witness, and I've been a dumb one, more shame to me.

"They told me everything about Sir Creswell after I had satisfied their curiosity about the safe. The baronet had delusions. He carried all his money with him in sovereigns, and the big money box in the cabin held his fortune. It had come aboard at Tilbury, shipped straight from the Bank of England, and all the way out to Port Darwin the crowd in the fo'c's'le were guessing at the amount of coin inside it.

"You can picture them doing that guesswork, can't you? At Gibraltar they reckoned there were two hundred and fifty thousand sovereigns inside.

At Suez they spun the figure up to half a million. The heat was beginning to stir their imaginations up, see? Slamming across the Indian it got between them and their sleep, and the figures went up with hundred thousand leaps. When I got the strength of the secret they estimated the contents at a million, and it was spilling over that figure while we were cutting through Torres Strait.

"Sir Creswell had 'em all right. He was mad, sure. He had written a book to prove that the Israelites had wandered into the South Seas, and he was going down to those old Nantauch ruins in Ponape to hunt up fresh proof. The captain was a short, fat man named Smedley, and he suffered from chapped hands and asthma.

"Did you ever see a man that suffered from chapped hands who was any way imaginative? Smedley wasn't. If he had one ounce of imagination he would have felt the curiosity wave that was coming out of the fo'c's'le. But he didn't; and Sir Creswell was thinking so hard about the wandering Israelites that he didn't worry about the thoughts of common sailor men.

"We were slipping past the Louisiades when the thing happened. Did you ever think how much piracy those islands of Oceania are responsible for? There was one of those little green, heart-pulling spots to leeward one morning, and it brought that thing to a head in five seconds.

"I don't know what was done. I came up the ladder to find that White and Camphin had lashed the three boats together and built a platform over them, while Fulton, Brennan, and Beck were busy rigging a tackle at the side. I didn't see the captain or Sir Creswell after that.

"Fulton ordered me down to give White a hand, and because I asked White a question he banged me on the side of the head with his hammer, and I rolled under the planking that he was fixing to the boats.

"When I recovered my senses we were on our way to the island, and that big safe was perched in the center of the staging. I couldn't see the *Queen Regent*, so I guessed where she had gone. Fulton was giving directions on the pontoon, and we were moving over a sea of glass toward the land.

"We were close in to the island when the fog came on us. It swept up from the south like a big, fat cloud rolling along that greasy, smooth sea, and a thing like that is pretty unusual in those parts, isn't it? It seemed as if it was galloping to head us off from the short, and we couldn't move too fast. Ten minutes after we first sighted it coming, it was on us, and we lost our directions the minute it took us in its long white arms.

"Fogs are rather depressing at any time, but that white sheet crawling up out of a clear sky was worse than the ordinary. It sat on us, sort of bent our shoulders with the weight of it. We couldn't see a yard in front of us, and the five of them gave up pulling and stood with their hands on the safe, as if they were afraid it would walk away into that wall of mist. You couldn't guess how that safe had taken a grip of their minds.

"It must have been near dark when we struck land. We were swirling along in a current when the boats crashed into something and shot backward. We came forward again and bumped.

"The staging started to splinter beneath the weight of the safe, and Beck let out a yell of agony. The deaf and dumb fellow would have yelled, too, if he'd only known how. The safe had crashed forward and pinned the two of them beneath it.

"Fulton started to roar and curse. There was a big danger of us being swamped or smashed to pieces against the shore, and he jumped overboard into the shallow water, and tried to drag the pontoon onto a bit of sloping beach. The rest of us got at the safe with levers, and when the boat grounded we toppled the big black money box forward, and over it went into about two feet of water.

"The raft shot back with such a jerk when the weight was lifted that the four of us who were lifting the safe were flung into the water, and before we had time to scramble to our feet the undertow sucked the raft into the wall of fog like as if a hand had gripped it.

"It was sudden, that. We couldn't see a sign of it or hear any voices. P'r'aps Beck was too much injured to call out, and, of course, the deaf and dumb fellow couldn't.

"The waves were washing round our legs as we stood by the safe trying to see the raft in the fog. We couldn't do anything else. You could hardly see two yards in front of you, then, and the man who started to swim round in search of the boats would have a mighty poor chance of getting back to land.

"'Get the safe up on the beach,' growled Fulton, and the rest of us levered it up out of the water.

"Fulton wasn't troubling much about Beck or the deaf and dumb fellow. He had a skull that went up to a point like a tomcat's, and I bet he was thinking that there were two less to divide the money with. He hadn't spoken to me since he ordered me down to help White; but when we got the safe on dry land he turned and gave me a cuff in the ear that sent me backward.

"'Pity you didn't drift away instead of Beck,' he said. But I didn't answer. There was precious little use of picking a row just then.

"A blear-eyed moon started to peep through the fog, and we began to get a dim idea of our whereabouts. The island seemed to be only a few feet over sea level, and the ground was moist. It was a little bit more than moist. If we stood for five minutes in the one spot we sank up to our ankles, and we kept moving round looking for dry places.

"It was White who noticed the safe. 'Quick!' he yelled. 'She's sinking!'

"And it was sinking. It had gone down about eighteen inches while we were pottering round looking for a dry place to stand in, and we had a job to dig it out.

"We rolled it about five yards farther inland, then we stopped and watched it. The moon was shining a bit stronger then, and we could see. The name of the manufacturers, the Britannic Safe Company, was lettered in gold about six inches from the bottom, and as we stared the name was swallowed up.

"'Hell!' roared Fulton. 'Get your sticks under her again.'

"We went twenty yards farther and watched the same thing happen. We went a hundred and saw the safe start its disappearing trick again. We went half a mile, testing every yard of the ground as we rolled the thing along, but we couldn't find a solid spot.

"We had to turn back then. The island was only half a mile long, and there wasn't three square inches of it that would hold a grown man five minutes. It was just a floating bed of lava cinders held together by roots of grass, and it was just as qualified to hold up that big iron safe as a rocking-horse is to hold the Chinese giant!

"I don't know how many times we moved the safe that night. I guess about four hundred. Two minutes was as long as we dared to leave it in one spot, because if it got down any deeper there was a chance of it going for keeps. It was standing on a big sponge. The holes made a sucking noise when we heaved the safe out of them, and that row didn't improve our nerves as we kept on the move.

"Fulton accused the others of blocking him when he wanted to open the thing on the yacht, and White and Camphin gave him the lie, and told him he was in too much of a hurry to get away from his own handiwork.

"It went on like that all through the night. The four of 'em cursing at each other every time we were compelled to move the thing. It was devilish the way that ground sucked at the safe. Did you ever see quicksand eating anything? Well, that island was alive. There was a mouth gurgling at each man's boots, and a big maw guzzling at the safe every time we stopped. Get on your nerves, wouldn't it?

"I didn't work as hard as the rest on the transportation game. I had no hand in stealing the safe, and I didn't intend to take any of the money. But I had to help, or those four would have killed me.

"They worked like madmen. That safe had been on their minds ever since they left the Thames, and they were nearly mad to think of losing it, after what they had done. Nearly mad? I guess they were raving lunatics before the night was over.

"They kicked the island and danced on it, swearing at the spongy cinders all the time. They got down on their knees, and clawed at the stuff with their fingers, and screeched when it started to swallow them as they knelt. Then the four of 'em would fumble with the lock of the safe and beat it with the pieces of wood. All the tools and food had been lost when the boats were drawn into the fog.

"The morning came at last, and we could see all over the island. It was only half a mile each way, and there wasn't a patch of grass, stone, or stick upon it. Anything heavy on that cindery cushion didn't stay there long. It just slipped through and went plumb to the bottom of the Pacific.

"We kept on rolling the safe. Sometimes one of the four saw a place that looked a little drier than the rest of the ground, and we'd roll the safe there in a hurry. But it was always the same. The moment we stopped, the mouth started to suck at the big box. Good God! I dreamed of those million mouths for months afterward. Every time we pulled our boots out of a hole we looked back and shivered.

"It was hot that morning. The Pacific was just beside us, and the ocean seemed to be lying there, watching us, quite pleased at the trap into which we had fallen. But Fulton didn't let us stop a minute. Up and down the island we went without a rest, and the thing became a sort of nightmare. I wanted to throw away my lever and run, but there was no place to run to. That place, with its million mouths, was bound to get the safe, but those four couldn't bear to see it sink.

"Camphin gave in first. He was weak when he was on the yacht, and his strength gave out about midday. He threw away his stick and lay down, but Fulton made him get up again. Then he fell down again, and he couldn't struggle onto his feet. We didn't stop to help him, and we didn't see him again.

"Can you picture the rest of us going backward and forward over that spot? They were all weak, but they wouldn't leave the safe. They had been guessing too long at the contents of that iron box.

"Camphin's odd disappearance didn't trouble 'em, but every time the safe started to sink they'd spring forward like fiends. The thing had a three-inch casing of mud on it then, and you couldn't see Sir Creswell's coat of arms and the gold letters of that motto of his. *Quantum vis*, eh? They were getting the true meaning of that motto just then.

"We kept staggering behind the safe all day, and then the night came down on us again. There wasn't a sign of a sail. The ocean was lying there quietly, like a wolf that has a man up a tree, and thinks that the end is pretty sure. I guess we were all insane, then.

"'Long about midnight, Brennan got tired of working, and Fulton punched him. Fulton was a devil. He had tore all his clothes off, so that he could work better, and his bare body was covered

in a coating of mud, like the safe. When he fell down you couldn't tell him from the ground. We were all pretty near like that.

"Brennan began to cry when Fulton hit him, and he struck at the mate with his stick. Fulton sprang at him, and Brennan ran away. White and I kept the safe from sinking till Fulton came back. He brought Brennan's lever with him.

"Say, don't you think that parson was right when he said that crime and punishment grow on the one branch?

"We had to work a bit harder that night. The island was all mucked up with us tramping over it, and the safe couldn't be left a minute. I don't know whether it was my youth or whether it was because I didn't worry when I saw the cursed box slipping, but I was standing the fatigue better than White or Fulton. They could hardly stand, and the wonder is that they lasted through the night.

"The dawn was coming up from way over the Solomon Islands when White gave out. Money's the devil. He pushed the safe forward, and then fell down on his face, and stayed there. I don't know how long he stayed; Fulton didn't give me time to look behind.

"Fulton was a shrieking maniac then. He rushed that ugly mass of cinders and wrestled with it like as if it was alive. *Quantum vis*, eh? I tried to run, but he knocked me down with his pole and stood over me till I got on my feet again. He seemed to have the strength of three men, and he rushed the safe up and down the island. He was blinded with the cinders. I could have killed him then, but it didn't seem worth the effort. The pace was too fast to last, and it looked as if the island would win in the end.

"I don't know what time it was when the safe stuck. It burrowed its way down, inch by inch, and the slush around it started to boil. Fulton yelled and cursed. He flung away his lever, and clutched at the thing with his bare hands. But the safe had got a move on that time. The mouth sucked at it and it slid away from his grip, looking like a devilish, human-looking horror as it went. It frightened me.

"'Let it go!' I yelled, but Fulton wouldn't. He sprang on one end of it, and tried to tip it over on its side by dancing on it, and he screamed out to me to lend a hand. Do you guess what happened? That infernal thing lurched over suddenly, tossed Fulton on the cinders, and before he could scramble out of the way it had pinioned his two legs!

"I remember that I kept rolling over and over, so as to save my strength and rest myself, and in the afternoon I staggered to my feet and looked out to sea. A schooner was so close to the shore that I thought it was a dream, but they saw me when I waved my shirt, and I tumbled into the boat before it touched the land.

"That's all. It was a copra boat, beating down to the Marshall group, and they nursed me for a week or two. But I didn't mention anything about the safe. I did wrong. I know now. Why, God dealt with those five like He did with the Egyptians in the Red Sea, didn't He? And I had a narrow shave, just because I didn't try to block the game."

Kenyon stopped and stared at the damp patch on the plaited mat where the liquor had soaked through. The Malay filled his glass, but he took no notice. Presently, he put his head down on the table, and, covering his face, he sobbed quietly. I stood up, paid the score to the sleepy Malay, and stepped out softly, leaving behind me the man who had seen a miracle and never reported it.

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WHAT IS A BOOBY BIRD?

THE "boatswain" he is called in Webster's New International Dictionary, but navy men call him more definitely the "boatswain bird." A big sea bird found in West Indian and other seas, particularly at Bermuda where they bore holes high in the cliffs for nests. But farther south the same bird is called the "booby" so it is told. The "booby" proper, according to the dictionary, is a species of the antarctic penguin, a very ungainly creature. Now, what sailorman can tell us for sure just what is the "booby" bird?

THE GUFFAH

A TRAVELER in going about among the many out-of-the-way places of the earth will in the course of his travels see many queer kinds of boats, such as dahabeahs of the Nile, the junks and sampans of China and Japan, the dhows of the west coast of Africa, the proas of the East Indies, and the reed boats of Lake Titicaca. Of course there are others too numerous to mention.

The queerest boat of them all, however, is probably the "guffah." This boat is found on the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. It is about fifteen feet in diameter, and in shape resembles nothing so much as an immense fern dish. It is constructed of reeds woven over wooden uprights; these are thickly daubed with pitch to make them water-tight. Propulsion is accomplished by means of a pole or paddle, the natives standing on the rim of the boat and pushing or paddling as the occasion may require.

ILLUSTRATED BY HY. MAYER

When I was a mate on the *Tippecanoe*,
Our vessel set sail for the port Trinidad
With a cargo o' fly-paper bound for Peru,
Where flies and mosquitoes was drivin' folks mad.

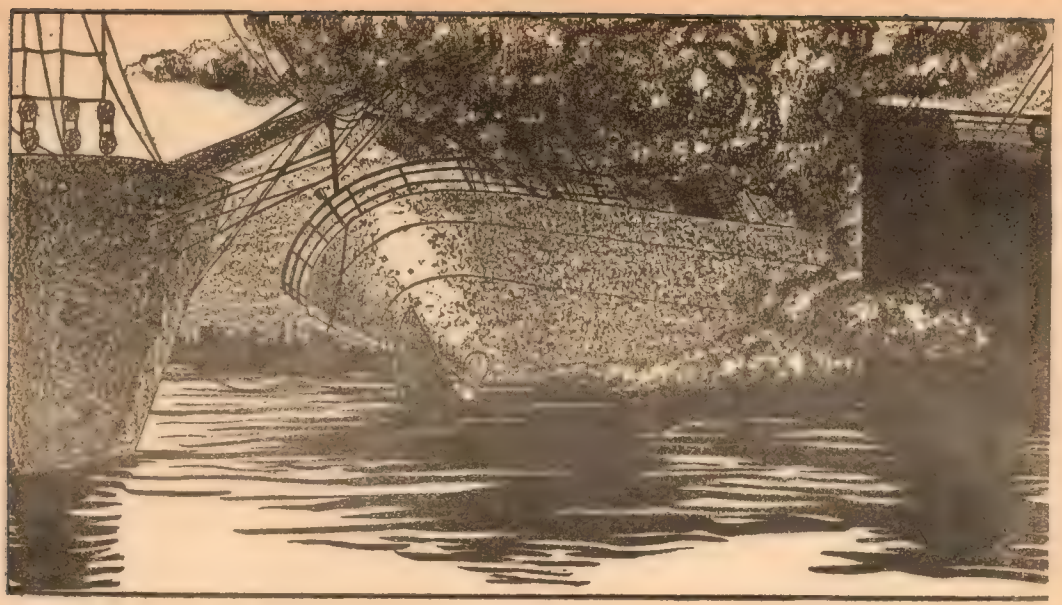
The *Tippecanoe* got that sticky at sea
We feared that our cargo would bring us bad luck;
For if we had touched upon land, seems to me
Our gallant old vessel would surely have stuck.

The sun it got hotter and hotter each day
And fried that there fly-paper down in the hold,
Till Timmins the skipper exclaimed in dismay:
"I'm stuck on me job—but I wish it was cold."

Well, nothin' much happened, till Saturday noon
We sighted some pirates hard-up in the lee,
Which made us some nervous, becuz we knowed soon
They'd start in to scrapin' us off o' the sea.

They soon overhauled us and, primin' ther guns,
They hollered "Ahoy!" through a megaphone horn;
"Our ship is the *Cockroach* of twenty-one tons—
Stand to or we'll sink ye as sure as ye're born!"

They boarded us quick, and ther capting, Dank Dan,
Yells: "Give us yer cargo!" (He thunk it was gold)
But Timmins jest grinned like a wise little man,
And says: "Help yerselves, lads—it's down in the hold."



CAPTAIN JONES

BY ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN

"Nonsense" was the captain's pet label. By it he damned wholeheartedly every opinion but his own. Consequently, when he took out the Blue Star, *notorious Jonah ship, and the mate warned him, he said —"Nonsense." He said it to the end.*

WEATHER had blessed the *North Star*. She made a record run home from Sydney, plowing past the Farallones two days ahead of schedule. She went through the Golden Gate, the tide and wind behind her and her engines, pulsing with full power. She docked smartly and without mishap, a broad-beamed, unlovely ship but the best freighter that the Star Line boasted.

When the last hawser had been made fast; when the telegraphs slanted at "Finished With Engines"; when the gangway was down and the hungry-looking stevedores swarmed aboard, Captain Jones blew his nose.

"A filthy ship," he said. He sniffed. He waved around with his great red handkerchief. "I have not had clean decks in weeks. She belches soot." He glared at the bridge planking under him, vaguely spotted with tiny, black specks. The third mate grinned as he pulled the canvas cover over the binnacle.

"Yes, sir," he said.

Captain Jones went on, talking more to himself: "Best ship of the line? Nonsense. I'll have to have that smokestack raised. Rolls like a barge, too. Dirty ship—— What're you giggling at?"

The third mate grew grave. He passed a length of boatlacing round the foot of the binnacle, made it fast, and crossed to the companion. He disappeared without a word. Captain Jones glared after him and mumbled to himself. Then he went down to his cabin.

A little man was the captain. He was very thin. He was sandy-haired and brown-eyed and somewhat old-fashioned. Freckles covered his pale, hairy hands. He took snuff.

In his cabin he flopped to a chair before his desk

and ruffled over some papers. He would have to get ashore and see the owner, make reports and what not. The mate poked his head inside the cabin.

"Can I get off, sir? You know I'm t' be married to-morrow. Day after I got home the girl promised. I want——"

Captain Jones looked up and sniffed. "Nonsense," he said. "Sailor's got no right marrying. Your place's here anyway. Stevedores running around the ship. Steal everything. I know."

The mate frowned moodily. He was a young man, fair-haired and tall. Rather good looking and very brown. Of course, it wasn't the thing to desert the ship right away, but——

The captain ruffled his papers. He swung round suddenly in his swivel chair and faced his first officer. He pulled out his red handkerchief and blew his nose. Then deliberately he took snuff from a flat, battered, white-metal box. "Nonsense," he snapped. "Get out of my sight." He swung back to the desk, seized a pen and wrote rapidly for a moment. He faced the perplexed mate again, waving a narrow, green strip of paper.

"Here y'are. Wedding present. Mayn't see you t'morrow. Good luck. Come back when you're through fooling."

The mate stumbled inside the cabin and took the check. His eyes widened as he saw the amount. He took off his peaked cap and fumbled for words.

The captain snarled: "Get out of my sight," and returned to his papers.

The mate hesitated for a while, blurted out, "Thanks, sir," and disappeared. He changed and was ashore in record time.

The captain mumbled "Nonsense," when he had gone. Then he blew his nose with some energy. A dapper, well-dressed man tapped at the cabin door. Captain Jones peered sideways.

"Well?" he barked.

The stranger said: "Mr. Bond wants t' see you right away, sir. I'm from the office."

"Right away?" The captain seemed amazed. "Damned shipowners," he grumbled. "Rush, rush, rush. Think a man's made of steam."

"He's pretty mad, sir," the clerk ventured. He attempted a grin: "Damned bad-tempered, I'd say."

Captain Jones glared at him: "Talking about Mr. Bond? Keep quiet. Fine old gentleman. Damned pups nowadays criticize too much. Fire you if I had you here."

The clerk gaped and shut up. Captain Jones gathered his papers, took a pinch of snuff and stalked out on deck. The clerk followed him at a respectful distance. And so they went down the gangway and along the wharf. And so they entered the Star Line's offices.

Mr. Bond was fuming. He was pacing up and down his office, muttering to himself. He was a clean-shaven, white-haired man. He was dressed in neat gray flannels and wore a flower in his buttonhole. When Captain Jones came in he stopped short and faced the little sailor.

. "Captain Jones!" he said. He cleared his throat with a deep cough. "Pleased to see you. Sit down. Fine trip you had. Fine ship that *North Star*. You're in line for a fat bonus this year. That ship makes more money than any other two——"

Captain Jones slammed his papers on the desk and produced his red handkerchief. He waved it around. "Nonsense," he snapped. "A filthy ship. The *North Star* belches soot! I have not had clean decks in weeks. A dirty ship! She rolls in a flat calm——"

"But," said the owner, "the time you made. Two days ahead of schedule."

Captain Jones snorted: "Nonsense!" again and blew his nose. "My mate's getting married. Let him off for a while, till we sail. Been with the line ten years. Suggest you make a little gift——"

The owner said: "Yes, yes," impatiently. He waved his hand. "We'll see to it—ahem! You'll take out the *Blue Star* on Monday."

The captain blew his nose again. He blinked. He went very red in the face. "That Jonah ship?" He seemed to swell. He snorted: "Am I a new master to be given——"

The owner broke in jerkily: "Not my fault. 'Pon honor. Got a perishable cargo. Must sail. Cap'n Sims sick. Sorry." He resumed his rapid pacing up and down the office.

Captain Jones croaked: "Damn!" He stuffed his handkerchief in his pocket. He took snuff copiously and slammed back the lid of the little metal box. He sniffed hard. He glared. He was very ruffled.

"A Jonah ship! Has she ever made a voyage that paid? She has not. She has spent the last four years getting off sand bars and reefs. She has disabled three engineers and one captain. She has rammed seven ships. If there was a derelict floating in the whole Pacific she'd hit it. And you ask me——" Words failed him. He snorted and took more snuff. Indignation bristled through him. It was an insult to him as commodore of the Star Line. To be given command of the ship that was the joke of the waterfront, the Jonah that ran into mishap always.

The owner mumbled meaningless words. He understood how his oldest captain felt. He kept his eyes on the carpet and blurted at last: "Not another master in port we'd care to trust that cargo to." Then as though struck with a sudden thought: "I guess I might as well let it go. Lose money but save a lot of grief. No man could get the *Blue Star* safe into Sydney harbor. She's the rottenest ship for luck on the coast."

"Nonsense," snapped the captain, automatically. He produced his red handkerchief again and waved it around. "I'm inclined to think she's not so black as painted. I know. You put cheap masters in com-

mand. What d'you expect? Can't be any worse than the *North Star*. A dirty ship. She belches soot——"

"Of course," said the owner. He lifted his head and stopped in his pacing. "I'm sorry about the soot. I take it then you don't want to take the *Blue Star* out. It's a stiff job——"

"Who said I don't?" the captain demanded. "I'll take that ship where no other man could. A little care. A little trust. Give a ship a bad name and sink her. I know. Not so bad as they make out." He was hot to defend the Jonah now. It was a wonderful chance to disagree with every one. He seemed to like it. The owner grinned under his hand and frowned above it.

Ships are like men. On some Fortune smiles from the day of launching. On others Fate bends a thunderous brow. Of the latter class was the *Blue Star*. She was notorious. She was possessed. A little black devil sat chuckling at her truck. She was a Jonah.

The *Blue Star's* mate was a melancholy man. He had a right to be. He had been on the vessel for five years.

"Damn' ship," he muttered gloomily. He was on the bridge on the first day out. The *Blue Star* had just missed running down a squat-bellied fishing craft. "Last trip she tied her engines in a knot. Drifted six days without power. Half a gale blowing."

Captain Jones frowned and blew his nose.

"Carelessness," he blustered. "Give a ship a bad name and sink her. I know." He took some snuff on his thumb-nail and sniffed mightily. The *Blue Star* had a purple record. All the water fronts knew it. Nonsense. He would kill that myth.

The mate sighed. He scratched his unshaven jaw. "The trip before we rammed the collier *Storstadt*. It was in a channel wide enough for two *Titanics*. Sometimes she answers her helm like a lady. Sometimes she don't. And like a lady just when you need it——"

"Nonsense," said Captain Jones. He blinked up at the tall mate and frowned. "A Jonah ship, eh? We'll break the jinx."

The mate said "Yeah," very irreverently and walked away. The captain scratched his head and sniffed. A very disagreeable man, the mate.

That evening, just as dusk came, a green, red and a white light appeared ahead of the *Blue Star*, shooting suddenly from a fog bank that hugged the water surface. Then after the lights came others, blazing in tiers. A big ship.

"Hard aport," said the captain calmly. He happened to be on the bridge at the moment. There was a lot of time to get clear. Nothing to be alarmed about. He trotted to the telegraph in case of emergencies and glared at the oncoming liner. She had already ported her helm and was starting to swing. From her keen forefoot the water curved and rose and creamed. Her speed was immense compared to the lumbering freighter. The sound of her band bridged the distance between the two vessels.

The mate of the *Blue Star* blared: "Hard a port!" to the helmsman.

Captain Jones blinked reproof. There was not the slightest need to bawl an order already given and repeated. The helmsman was complying. That mate would have to be told a thing or two.

The mate crossed the bridge on the run and dived into the wheelhouse. The captain sniffed and glared after him. Then he faced for'ard again and his jaw dropped. The *Blue Star* was charging straight into the beam of the liner, charging like an iron-headed bull.

"Nonsense," croaked Captain Jones. He didn't believe it. He fumbled for his red handkerchief. Recalling himself he jerked at the telegraphs. He put one handle "Full ahead," the other "Full astern." Lucky the ship had twin screws. They were good for steering in an emergency.

From the liner's murk-shrouded bridge came a confused shouting. On the fo'c's'le head of the *Blue Star* the lookout screamed and started to run along the foredeck. With exasperating slowness the freighter started to come around. In the wheelhouse the mate was spinning the spokes with profane energy.

It was the liner that saved herself. Her great speed and easy helm drew her clear. She came right around and the *Blue Star's* heavy, blunt bows just grazed the paint of her port quarter. Over the monster's bridge rail a gray head and gold-braided shoulders appeared. For the first time in a dozen years the master of the *Empress of Asia* forgot his dignity. And he resurrected his voice that had once sounded from a windjammer's poop to the fore-royal yard in the teeth of a squall.

"Where're y'u comin' to? Get that tin can clear! A damned scow——"

There was a lot more. On the liner's promenade deck evening-gowned ladies stopped their ears and blushed, for the band had stopped and every word was plain. Gentlemen grew paralyzed with admiration. Later on they were indignant, not realizing how great the anxiety and relief of the master. His was the responsibility of nearly a thousand lives and a narrow escape was apt to be unnerving.

On the liner's bridge the gray-haired, dignified mate was saying: "Sir! Sir! For heaven's sake, sir!" and pulling at his captain's arm.

"Leave me alone," roared the master of the *Empress*. Then louder yet: "Listen to that——"

Captain Jones was half-standing on the rail of his own bridge. He was shaking a fist. And in the fist was his red handkerchief. He was yelling: "Scow yourself! Come down off that bridge. Think you

own the sea? Calling my ship a scow! Come down——"

"Bah!" said the captain of the *Empress of Asia*. He recalled himself suddenly and disappeared inboard. He flushed redly and straightened his collar. He felt better than he had in years. Meekly he listened to his mate's reproofs.

"Scum! Gold-braided dock scum!" snapped Captain Jones. He was suddenly aware that the other master was long since out of hearing. He dropped breathless back to the bridge and blew his nose. Nothing would have made him admit now that the *Blue Star* had been at fault. Calling his ship a scow! Damn them! All she needed was a little care. A little trust.

The mate called from the wheelhouse where he was steering:

"Straighten her out, sir!"

The captain jumped to the telegraphs and jerked them both to "Full ahead." He had forgotten them. He approached the wheelhouse and his eyes popped at the sight of the helmsman limp in one corner.

He asked mildly: "What seems to be the trouble?"

The mate sighed and relaxed. He took his eyes slowly from the binnacle card as the *Blue Star* came back on her course. "Near squeak that—man taken sick," he said. His voice grew gloomy and sour lines appeared in his face. "It couldn't happen until it was needed. This ship——"

"Nonsense," snapped the captain with enjoyment. He took snuff with a vigorous sniffing. "I'll send a man up to take the wheel." He looked serious. "This Jonah stuff's got on your nerves. Nonsense, utter nonsense."

He fumbled in his coat for his silver whistle to summon the watch. He frowned darkly. Man collapsing at the wheel. Coincidence. He somehow felt he was going to enjoy the whole voyage. For the whole ship was in disagreement with him, not only the men but the craft herself. Pugnaciousness welled in him. He liked trouble.

The helmsman was taken for'ard and placed in his bunk. The mate gave him a pill. The mate was the official doctor on the *Blue Star*. He gave pills on all occasions. It scarcely mattered whether a man had a suspicious cough or a broken arm. He was pilled.

The helmsman recovered. It appeared he had a weak heart and had felt an attack coming on just as he got the order to shift his helm. Captain Jones rubbed his hands with pleased satisfaction when he heard. There it was. Simple. Absolute coincidence. Jonah, nonsense. He was inclined to think the whole superstition was greatly exaggerated. Lucky the examining doctor for the Star Line was negligent. Lucky, that is, for the helmsman. Else he wouldn't have got a job with his weak heart.

"I told you," said Captain Jones to the mate, as they both came from the fo'c's'le after seeing the sick man. "Accident. Wouldn't happen again in a thousand years. Not at a critical time like that, anyway."

"Jonah," intoned the melancholy mate. He had sailed on the *Blue Star* for five years. Sometimes he wondered why he was still alive.

Two days later three men carried a coal-blackened trimmer along the fore deck. Captain Jones, pacing the lower bridge, peered over the rail and snapped: "What's the matter?"

"Bensen, sir. Trimmer, sir." The three carriers stopped to explain.

"Dead?" said the captain.

"No, sir. Coal rolled on him in No. 2 bunker. Shook up a bit. Knocked cuckoo."

"I'll be along to see him," the captain snapped. He came down the companion to the main deck and went midships to see the chief engineer. Sarcastically he inquired if that worthy could not prevent his coal rolling. The argument took some time. Meanwhile the trimmer was taken to his bunk.

"Jonah," said the pessimistic mate when the captain told him. He knew.

The captain said: "Nonsense," and blew his nose. He also thought the occasion required snuff. "A fine ship this. I can't understand your moaning. Coal's liable to fall down any time." He had just spent several minutes denying the possibility to the chief engineer. He went on: "Haven't we logged two hundred and fifty-odd miles every day?" He sniffed.

The mate gloomed: "Well, so far we have. There's a month or so——"

"Nonsense," snapped the captain. "A fine ship. Don't argue. A little care. A little trust. All she needs." He sneezed and took more snuff. The mate sighed

The captain went on again: "My old vessel now, the *North Star*. Vile! Utterly vile! Never could keep the decks clean. Soot! Good heavens—the soot! Rolled like a log, too. Scuppers under most of the time. Smokestack too low. Port engineer said it couldn't be raised because—don't remember why. Nonsense, though. Man doesn't know his job."

"Best ship in the line, they say." The mate frowned. "Got the speed. Twelve knotter, ain't she? Say she's the finest quarters, too." The mate was perplexed. What was a little soot? Nearly all ships sprayed that over the decks. What was anything so petty so long as a ship had good sailing luck? And good quarters? And good grub? What sort of a man was this new skipper anyway? Grumbling when things were all right. Arguing when things were all wrong. Cantankerous little cuss. Queer. That was it.

Somewhere to the south of Samoa the *Blue Star* ran into a light gale. The sky remained a hard blue. The sun shone brightly. But the sea ran high and the wind was strong. The *Blue Star* lost quite a bit of her movable gear. Some of her super-

structure suffered. Two men were disabled by a derrick that broke loose and plowed sidewise across the deck. At the same time, toward the end of the blow, the *Blue Star* lost a propeller.

"Some storm, that," said the captain indignantly. "Enough to make the *Olympic* grunt. My old ship now, the *North Star*, would have rolled her bridge off. Dirty craft."

"Oh!" choked the mate. He cursed to relieve his feelings. He felt he had to say something. "There's no other ship at sea would lose a screw in a squall. That's the Jonah."

But Captain Jones snorted: "Nonsense," and trotted for'ard to where the men were piling up the cargo from the after holds so that the ship's head would sink and the stern raise out of the water. The engineers were already aft planning rigging and ways and means for the spare screw to be shipped. It was possible to run with one propeller but Captain Jones decided to attempt the repair.

The wireless hummed and fizzed. The owner in far-off San Francisco groaned when he received the news. But what else could he expect, putting a cargo that was perishable and demanded fast delivery in a Jonah ship? Then wrath stirred in him, wrath that had been accumulating for years. Damn that ship! He was through. He burned up the calbes to Australia. The Star Line's agent in Sydney received instructions that caused him to chuckle and scout along the water front for prospective shipowners.

In the meantime the screw was fixed, after the tackle for hoisting had broken twice and the chief engineer had received a crushed hand. Then the *Blue Star* proceeded on her way.

"Likely to happen to any freight packet," declared the captain firmly.

The mate glowered. "Yah!" he said. He knew. Hadn't he sailed on the ship for five years?

The captain blew his nose at the retort. He wagged a bony forefinger. "Don't 'Yah!' me. You're no sailor, mister. A sailor should have implicit trust in his ship."

"A Jonah," wheezed the mate, growing purple. "Trust? Oh, my——"

"Nonsense," snapped the captain. He looked stern. "Nonsense." He took some snuff. "A fine ship. A little care. Some attention in dry dock occasionally."

The mate stalked away. His bitter "Yah!" came drifting back over his shoulder. Captain Jones trotted after him indignantly. The mate closed his ears. He didn't want to listen. You couldn't tell him about the *Blue Star*.

A hundred miles east of Crowdy Head, off the Australian coast, the *Blue Star* justified her existence for the first time since she had been launched. Even the mate had to admit that. Captain Jones was hilarious. Of course he had been right all along. He knew. The *Blue Star* grazed the side of a derelict.

It was at night. Soon after four bells in the middle watch it happened. The moon was just rising, a pure silver disk over the black sea. The stars were bright and thick, crowding each other through the sky. There was no excuse for the *Blue Star* to graze anything.

But on the fo'c's'le head the lookout slumbered, leaning against a ventilator. The second mate was nodding over a half-eaten sandwich in the chart house. The helmsman could not see because of the binnacle glow in his eyes, and anyway he was steering in his sleep. Captain Jones, who never seemed to sleep at all, was reading "How to Raise Potatoes on a Poor Soil" in his cabin.

First came a light bump, then a heavy jar. Followed a rasping sound. The *Blue Star* heeled far over. Everything went to leeward with much noise. There was an enormous clanging as all the galley pots broke loose and rolled on the tiled deck. The second mate awoke with a jump, swallowed the chunk of sandwich he had been holding in his mouth, and started to cough.

The helmsman blinked and found himself off his course. The lookout, making a bluff that he had been awake, called out some deliberately nonunderstandable words as a stop-gap till he had time to look around. The captain dropped his "How to Raise Potatoes on a Poor Soil" and fell out of his cabin, bareheaded.

The lookout, frantic to save his face, yelled clearly: "Ship on the starboard beam, sir! Right on!"

And the second mate said: "Good Lord!" in an awed voice, so soon as he had a voice to speak with. He shot out of the chart room and saw the long, dark hull and spars of a slightly listing ship. She was bumping aft along the *Blue Star's* hull.

Chaos broke loose abruptly. From the fo'c's'le men poured, half-naked, for the night was hot. The mate and the third came to view, mechanically pulling on their uniform jackets before their shirts were properly tucked in. The cooks and stewards appeared from aft. Hurricane lanterns danced over the decks. Lights switched on.

Captain Jones reached the bridge and sniffed. He scratched his bare, right ankle with his big, left toe and gaped.

"What seems to be the matter?" he inquired. His voice was mild. The second mate tottered toward him.

"Ship, sir. There——" He remembered his duty abruptly. "Hard aport!" He cupped his hands round his mouth and his voice rose. "Ship ahoy! Look out there!"

The captain peered at the strange vessel. He noted the drooping, uncared-for rigging, the broken foremast, the blank navigation lights. In the glim-

mer of the rising moon things were growing plainer every moment.

"Abandoned!" snapped Captain Jones. He snorted and groped in the pocket of his pajama jacket. He frowned. He turned to the worried second mate. "Send a man to get my handkerchief from the desk."

The captain grunted and blew his nose. The mate appeared at his elbow, probing the night with keen eyes.

"Derelict, sir. And floating high. There's a wad of dough."

"Of course." The captain blew his nose again. He thought. He sniffed. "Stop the ship. Get a boat out and board her, that packet. Bless my soul, a derelict." He felt dazed. It was the first time in a long career he had had fortune thrust upon him.

The second mate went away toward the babble on the main deck, shouting for the bos'n. The mate said, in a strange, awed voice, as though suddenly remembering something: "Grazed us, by heavens! We ought to have hit her smack in the guts and got sunk——"

"Nonsense," squeaked the captain. He was glad an opportunity to disagree had arisen. It would make him feel more himself. This sudden promise of wealth had almost made him reasonable.

"Nonsense," he snapped again. "And stop that croaking."

The mate ventured doggedly: "Grazed us, by heavens!" He didn't seem to be able to get over it. It was a violation of five years' experience on board the *Blue Star*.

He made a desperate bid to reassure himself: "It ain't natural. Grazed her. Grazed—chances are that ship's got the plague. Men don't abandon a sound, high-riding packet. I'll wager it's the plague. Like as not they'll find dead men on the deck and——"

"Will you shut up!" snorted the captain. He blew his nose once more and moved to the telegraphs, the second mate having forgotten to ring "Stop" in his haste. The *Blue Star* drifted with the swell as her engine pulse died. Boat falls screamed. Fortunately the water was smooth. The lost ship drifted astern, swaying slightly, twisting to some vague current, shadowy and alone under the moon.

They found her desolate, lacking boats and life rafts and life belts, except for a few of the latter scattered over her fiddley. For'ard the decks were charred and split and the seams of the planking warped. It looked as though there had been a fire, smothered some way, probably after desertion. Heavy rains would account for the smothering perhaps. The lower holds sloshed with water under a cargo of hides and tallow.

Her name was the *Mannix* and her port of registry was Bombay. There was little to show how long she had been adrift. Her papers were gone. Her log book was gone. In the fo'c's'le and in the cabins clothes were scattered, slightly mildewed. The hull appeared sound enough. A rich salvage.

From the *Blue Star's* stern a powerful wire went dancing. The second mate had it taken round the foremast of the *Mannix* and brought back to the fo'c's'le head bitts. The *Blue Star* stood away for Sydney again. Apart from having a man knocked unconscious while hoisting the boat inboard, splintering the boat itself, and the third mate having a brand-new uniform ruined with grease from the great wire, no sign of the Jonah was apparent."

"Salvage," croaked Captain Jones. He blew his nose and sniffed. "Salvage. Good work. This ship's worth her keep. A little care. A little trust. You see she brought us a fortune—just look at that packet. Five thousand tons if she's a pound." The need for snuff was becoming insistent. The captain shouted to a grubby-faced deck boy to go and get his box from off his desk.

The melancholy mate sighed.

"It'll come back," he said. Moodily he looked across the moonlit distance to where the *Mannix* bobbed gracefully and slow at the end of the wire. "Never knew it to fail. Like as not that ship'll ram us first blow that comes up. Three trips ago we hit——"

Captain Jones snapped: "You're crazy! Been too long on one vessel. A few accidents rocked your nerves. I know. Try a change. Fine packet. You've got to trust her. Any sailor must trust his ship. A ship's like a woman. She knows when you despise her and she acts accordin'."

"Yah," said the mate. He spoke no more. What was the use? He had sailed on the *Blue Star* for five years. He ought to know her ways.

Captain Jones was very pleased. For the rest of the night he walked the bridge in his pajamas. He rubbed his hands together. He chuckled. He sent out no wireless, deciding to keep the great news for the Australian cables. Pleased would be the owner to learn of this fat profit. Jonah ship, bah! The *Blue Star* was making enough money now to pay for a dozen bad voyages.

They went into Sydney with an air of great importance. Captain Jones walked the *Blue Star's* bridge and scowled like any admiral of the fleet. Occasionally he flung a backward glance at his salvage. Tugs snorted near. He waved them away. It was a moment of triumph. He expected headlines in the shipping news the next day. He had squelched the melancholy mate for good and all. It was a time for crowing.

The mate stood in the bridge wing biting his nails. On his brow there was a slight sweat. He moved his feet uncertainly. He was frowning. A worried look was in his eyes. Nothing had happened since the picking up of the derelict, absolutely nothing. And he had been five years on the *Blue Star*. It was against experience and knowledge. It was unbelievable. It was as though the

ship had suddenly made up her mind to be good while commanded by this queer little captain who took snuff and waved a great, red handkerchief clenched in a freckled fist.

The ships neared the anchorage. The captain stopped in his walk and took snuff. He considered the tugs. He ought to take perhaps two to handle the *Mannix*. He sniffed hard.

"I'll be glad when we drop the hooks," said the mate, coming in from the bridge wing. He ran a handkerchief round the inside of his limp, white collar. His hands were trembling slightly. The captain sniffed again. He blew his nose.

"It's all over now. Your Jonah's gone fishing. Calm weather all the way in. Good work. Safe in harbor now. I know. Wait till the owner hears." He blew his nose once more and dabbed at his lips. He opened his mouth to give orders for anchoring. The mate started to go for'ard where he would have been long since if he hadn't felt so nervous.

Then from a side slip, far across the harbor, swayed a fat-girthed, ugly collier tramp. Her masts and smokestack were black and sooty. Her decks were coal dust and dirt. She wallowed low in the water. She was an offense to the clear sky and the finest harbor in the world. On her bridge small figures could be seen gesticulating furiously. They were also shouting but the distance was too great for them to be heard.

Captain Jones eyed the oncoming craft with great concern. She seemed to be running wild. Her bow swung erratically. She headed first toward the harbor mouth and then for the *Mannix* or the *Blue Star* impartially.

The mate ran back on the bridge. He was almost relieved. He had expected something. The strain was over.

"I knew it," he stormed, anger sweeping him. "It was too damned good to last. That Jonah—she'll hit us smack and down we go."

The captain, agitated, took some snuff. "Nonsense," he croaked. "She's heading for our stern, way past us—why in hell don't they stop her if they can't steer?"

The mate recovered and wiped his lips. His philosophy and pessimism came back. He ventured mildly: "P'raps they can't. P'raps they can't steer her—I knew it." He paused and went on bitterly. "They've got all the harbor to run wild in but they'll hit us just the same."

On the *Mannix* the second mate was bawling through a megaphone. He was nervous. He had never had a ship in his charge without her own power before. He wanted to know what he should do.

"Swallow it!" snarled the mate. He glowered astern. "Can't we see?"

The collier swayed across the intervening distance. It looked at first as though she would pass far astern of both inbound ships. Tugs were racing to catch her. Her bow swung abruptly full on the *Blue Star*.

"Yah!" The mate spat resignedly overside.

"My heavens!" snapped the captain. He took some more snuff.

"Better let go the tow. We can't maneuver with that drag." The mate's voice was cold now. His glance rested on the popping-eyed captain with some measure of triumph. What had he got to say about the Jonah now?

"Nonsense," said the captain. "And lose my salvage? I should say not! Hi! Get that ship under control."

He blew his nose while he waited. He felt indignant that a strange ship should threaten him when all the space of the harbor was available for rioting over. The mate stood beside him and gloomed. Surely the collier must be brought under control soon.

She swung nearer, lurching and turning slowly. Three tugs crossed her path and flung lines to hopping figures on the grimy fo'c's'le head. Every line missed. The tugs swerved clear and made ready for a new onslaught. It was the Jonah working again. Hardly ever in the history of the sea had three lines missed so completely before.

Captain Jones awoke to life. "Cut that tow!" he stormed. But the mate knew that even if there had been an hour to cut the line it would not have been time enough. Hadn't he sailed with the Jonah for five years? So he leaned over the bridge rail and called calmly instead: "Stand by the boats."

The collier struck with all the force of ten thousand moving tons. She raked the *Blue Star* right abaft the engine room, holing her badly. The *Blue Star* staggered, reeled over, righted herself very slowly and then sank.

When he picked himself up after the impact Captain Jones balanced on the shaking deck and automatically blew his nose. "Nonsense," he said.

The mate clawed up to him.

"We'll have to leave her, sir."

The captain roused himself and groped for his snuff box. "We will not. There's no danger—— Carpenter! Where in hell—— Oh, here. What water in the hold?"

The carpenter, who could tell without aid from his sounding rod and line, said bluntly: "She's gone, sir. Hole as big as a house."

"Abandon ship," said the captain. He was very quiet and a little gray. "See the men all get away, mister." The sudden pitch underfoot told him what was happening. He spun upon his heel as a terrific crash burst on his ears.

The collier, hitting the *Blue Star* with great force, had swung around, her bow a pivot, her engines at "Full ahead" because something queer had happened to them and her engine room was full of scalding steam. Her steering gear, too, was

strangely locked or broken. She had dropped from the hole she had made in the *Blue Star's* side and had, swinging still, battered savagely with her stern against the *Mannix*.

The *Mannix* went over on her beam ends, with half her hull caved in. She settled swiftly. The second mate and his men launched their boat in record time. They pulled clear and then lay on their oars and cursed the collier.

The sinful craft had gone off drunkenly across the harbor, down by the head but still a menace. Tugs were clustering round her now thick as bees.

"Damned good job," said the mate when he had time to think. "Jonah ship. Bottom. Where she belongs."

"Nonsense," snapped Captain Jones feebly. Tears were in his eyes. He blew his nose and wondered. Even though the *Blue Star* was not an old ship of his he felt her loss. The boat rocked in the wash from a flush-decked tug that flew the Star Line's house flag. From the pilot-house window leaned the company's agent. Behind him the tug captain could be seen at the wheel.

"'Lo, Jones," called the anxious agent. "What a mess. All safe?"

"All safe," said the captain. His voice was tinny. "That collier——" Words failed him. He waved his red handkerchief, inarticulate. He blinked. Salvage gone. Ship gone. So they were all right. There was a Jonah. Perhaps the company that owned the collier would pay all losses.

"Damned good job," grunted the agent. He nodded as the *Blue Star's* ugly stern slid from view. An eruption of steam and oil and much sound boiled the surface. "She's been a dead loss to the company since she was built."

"You bet," said the mate, fully agreeing. The captain snapped: "Nonsense," and began to feel better. The men in the boats clambered aboard the tug and scattered over the deck. The officers went up onto the tiny bridge outside the glass-windowed pilot house.

"What was that packet behind?" asked the agent. They told him the tale. He nodded sympathy.

"About the *Blue Star*. This is what Mr. Bond sent me." He handed the captain the cable the owner had sent when the news came of the lost propeller south of Samoa. It read:

Sell that ship. Under no consideration send her home. Jones is to wait for the *North Star* sailing this week. Pay off crew.

"Nonsense," croaked the captain, slightly dazed. He groped for his snuff box. "The *Blue Star* was a fine ship. A little care. A little trust. All she needed. I know. That collier——"

"Of course, captain," soothed the agent. "But never mind. We'll get the value of her and your salvage out of the collier. She belongs to the Oceanic Steam Packet Company. We've been fighting 'em for years. You're to wait for your old command, the *North Star*."

"That ship?" Captain Jones swelled. Decidedly now he felt better. Pugnaciousness welled in him. He raked out his red handkerchief and shook it in his fist, as though throttling it. "That ship? Bah! She belches soot. I can't keep the decks clean. And dirty! She rolls scuppers under in a calm. Do nothing with her. Vile! Absolutely vile——"

"A little trust," mimicked the mate. "A little care. A sailor must have some trust in——" He subsided as the captain glared at him.

The captain went on:

"A fine ship, the *Blue Star*. A little care. That was all. I never had any trouble with her—perhaps a few accidents. No more."

The melancholy mate said: "Jonah all over. I know. Damned packet'd hit a cork if she had thirty thousand miles of sea room." He ought to have known. Hadn't he sailed on the *Blue Star* for five years?

"Nonsense," snorted Captain Jones. He was all right now. Also he was very indignant. "That's a damned lie," he said. He blew his nose and glared.

The mate sighed. He walked away with a murmured "Yah!" Besides, what was the use? Captain Jones never agreed with any one.

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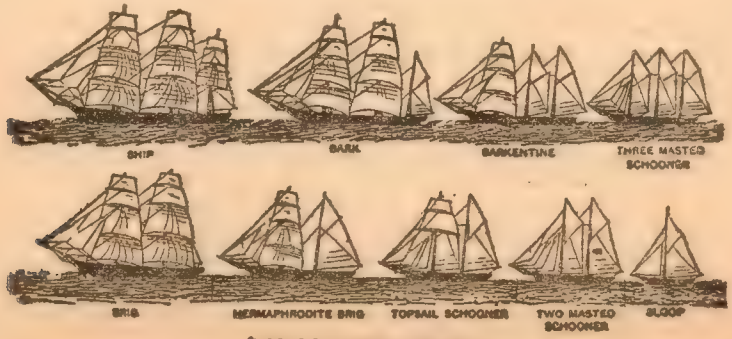

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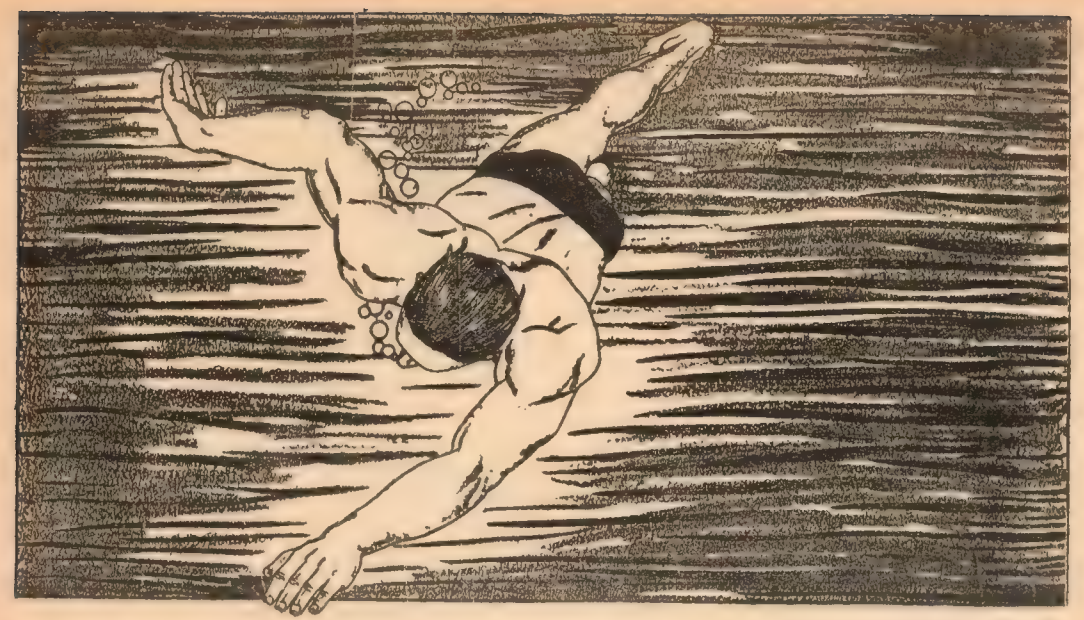

THE ORIOLE CHANGES MASTERS

BY DON WATERS

The Oriole's *reputation as a hard-luck boat did not dishearten the luckless Yankee skipper. Neither did it dishearten Rounsvall, the sponge fisher, until he capitalized the schooner's bad reputation for certain reasons of his own. And then the bad luck changed owners—and so did the* Oriole.

IT'S an old yarn, that one of the dogs which always returned home no matter how often his master sold him. And although Amos Witherbee knew the story well, he little thought that the same trick in a different guise would be played on him.

He had been in Nassau about a week when one afternoon as he idly sat on a mooring bit, he noticed a little two-masted schooner round the point and work up toward the quays. She was about forty feet on the water line. Her hull was jet black. Her copper bottom shone as the sun glinted on it. Her rails and deck house were white and her decks were painted a brilliant orange; that is what showed of them beneath the load of sponges piled high upon her.

With a sailor's eye for a trim vessel Amos carefully watched her. Close-hauled she sped along like a prancing young colt. The luff of her sails shivered and trembled, so close she was pointed, and yet she was making good speed as she edged to windward. She fell off, gathered way, swung back, and with a nicely timed luff shot dead into the wind's eye. Her sails flapped and the *Oriole*, as the name on the transom showed her to be, ranged alongside the dock, clearing it by an inch, so skillfully had the maneuvering been performed.

A little dark-complexioned man with a big straw hat on his head tossed Amos the end of a line. Amos bent a couple of turns about a post, dropped a half hitch in it, and made the mooring line snug.

"Much obliged, friend," said the man. "It's easy to see you've done that before." With a quick glance at Amos' thick blue-flannel shirt and heavy cap he inquired, "Stranger here?"

"Yes," said Amos. "From Glo'ster way, down for the winter. Yon's the smartest little craft I've seen since I landed here."

"Come aboard, come aboard," was the reply. "Look her over; make yourself easy. Rounsvall's my name."

Amos promptly accepted the invitation and introduced himself, adding, "Been fishing all my life. Cold weather got me, so I decided to spend the winter here."

"Fine place," said Rounsvall, leading the way aft. "I like it. I'm in the sponge business as you can see," pointing to his cargo. "Good place to make money. Good business, big demand for them, can't get enough to market, natives no good, work a few days, lay off a week," he jerked out in quick, sharp sentences. He seated himself on the low cabin top and indicated a canvas deck chair for Amos. "Now if I could just get an up-to-date man interested, that is if he had some money to put in, we could clean up big. Make a lot of money," he added, watching the effect of his words on Amos through narrowed lids.

Amos rapidly considered it. Here was a chance, the very thing he had been waiting for. It wouldn't do to appear anxious, though. He began cautiously: "I have a small sum laid by, but yon sponging is a new game to me. I'd like to know some more about it before I jumped in too deep. I like to drop my lead before I heave the anchor over in strange soundings."

"Right, right," answered Rounsvall promptly. "I'll unload these sponges in a couple of hours. Then we'll take on some stuff. I run a store about eighty miles east of here on Single Shot Cay. Get your things aboard, come along home with me, stay a week, two weeks, as long as you like, see for yourself, won't cost a penny." He turned about and called to a negro on the dock. "Ahoy, there! Go with this man, here, will you, and get his things down. Step lively now." He tossed a shilling to the dock.

A little hesitant at this summary manner of taking himself in hand, Amos paused on the deck. But Rounsvall allowed of no upsetting of his plans. "Just take the boy along with you, Mr. Witherbee. No need to carry your own things."

Amos jumped to the dock. After all, this was a man to his liking, to follow word with action. "All right, Mr. Rounsvall, I'll be with you soon."

With the native in tow, he led the way up the street, and within two hours he had moved back aboard the *Oriole*. The loading was soon finished and the schooner pushed out and headed east. When they were well out of the harbor Rounsvall turned the tiller over to one of his negroes.

"Hold her as she is, Jim," he ordered. "Let Bill spell you off later." And to Amos; "Come below, Mr. Witherbee."

Once down in the little cabin Rounsvall produced a bottle. "Have some?" he offered.

Amos shook his head. "Thanks, man," he said. "But I haven't touched the stuff now for near on twenty years, and I hope I never take another. Not that I mind any one else taking a bit now and then, but just as a matter of principle, as ye might say, I let it be."

Rounsvall seemed disappointed at these views. His face fell. Then in an effort to cover up his displeasure, he said, "Ah, well, I guess I'll drink it myself then."

Glass after glass he poured out. Soon the whiskey loosened his tongue. Pulling a big roll of bills from his pocket, he unsnapped the band from around them, displaying the tarnished yellow color of hundred-dollar notes before Amos. He bragged: "Two thousand dollars here. Made it all myself in the last year. Easy money. Make another thousand before the year is out."

Amos cautioned him: "Man, is it not a big risk to carry that much money on yourself? Why not bank it?"

"Risk! Ha, ha!" laughed Rounsvall. "I'm my own bank; trust no one but myself. I'll take care of myself all right."

Reaching into a sheath that hung on his belt, he pulled out a heavy bone-handled dirk with a six-inch razor-edged blade. "Here's my protector. Like to see any one mess with me. I'm Rounsvall, the bad man of the Bahamas. They know me from Memory Rock to San Salvador. Know better than to cross me."

Foolish bragging of a drunkard, thought Amos. That's the whiskey talking. After a few more drinks Rounsvall began to babble incoherently and soon he was asleep, sprawled across the table, the bottle in one hand, the knife in the other. Amos returned it to its sheath, heaved the empty bottle over the side, pulled off Rounsvall's shoes, and rolled him into his bunk. He then went up on deck for a turn about before turning in on the opposite bunk and soon falling asleep.

The next morning at sunrise when he awoke, Rounsvall was still snoring loudly. Amos left him and went up on deck to look about. During the night the breeze had died down and now the *Oriole* was drifting along barely under steerage way. Going forward, Amos watched with interest the cook preparing breakfast over his primitive apparatus. It was just a box with a lid that could be dropped over in bad weather. The bottom was covered with a layer of sand. A fire was glowing on the sand. Over the fire a pot boiled merrily.

"Green-turtle stew," explained Bill, the cook, as he ladled out a tin plate full and offered it to Amos. "It's very good, sir."

And after Amos had finished a second helping he too was willing to admit that he had fared worse than on green-turtle stew. After finishing, he went aft again. Bill was not very talkative. The negro at the wheel was much more so.

Amos sat on the rail and looked over the side at the bottom that slowly slid past. He was lost in wonder at the sights flashing by in the clear water beneath.

"Cap'n," the helmsman's voice recalled him. "There no sponge there. Water too shallow. Sponge in three, four fathom', this two fathom'. Maybe a few hard-head and glove sponge. Plenty grass sponge over there," pointing out to where the light-green shoal water turned to a deep blue in sounding. Then indicating the opposite direction toward the northward, "Sheep wool, white reef, lots of Abasco velvet sponge; dark reef, all good sponge," continued the negro. "Over there, that the Gingerbread Grounds. That where we go to dive them up."

So they talked about sponges for quite a while. In this time, Amos learned what was the best way to gather sponges. To his question: "Do you grapple them up like oysters?" he learned that they must be dived up, cut clean off from the rocks, and not fished off with tongs.

"Tear 'em off. Sponge worth only half when all split," was the explanation.

It was an interesting game, this sponging.

After the negro had talked for fifteen minutes or so Amos asked: "Have you been working for Mr. Rounsvall long?"

Jim speculated. "Five, maybe six year' now, work for him sponging."

"And has he had the *Oriole* that long?"

Hesitantly Jim replied, "No, he have the *Oriole* about two year' now, on and off."

Puzzled, Amos questioned: "On and off? What do you mean?"

"Nothing, sir. Just on and off."

There was something peculiar in the negro's action. When he was telling of the sponges he was free and open. As soon as the boat was mentioned he became hesitant and confused. He acted as if he wanted to tell something and yet knew hardly how to express it. But before Amos could talk further to him Rounsvall came out of the cabin.

He showed no traces of his carousal of last night but seemed as sharp as ever. He shot a quick questioning look at the negro, and then kept up a running line of comment while he ate the turtle stew brought aft by Bill.

Having finished, he stood up and pointed over the bow. "See that island just ahead?"

Amos looked and saw a couple of miles away the shine of a white-coral beach, the dense green of the jungle in the background, the tops of a clump of palms, and above them a dozen masts.

"That's Single Shot Cay," said Rounsvall. "We'll be at the settlement now in a little."

True to his word, in half an hour, the *Oriole* was anchored and Rounsvall rowed Amos ashore. The settlement consisted of Rounsvall's white frame house and a dozen sheet-metal shacks. Along the water's edge were rows of sponges drying in the sun. From them arose the damp, musty smell of decaying animal matter which was prevalent everywhere. A half dozen natives were turning them over, sorting out the light, fluffy, dry ones and stacking them on the wharf in a separate pile.

Down near the wharf stool Rounsvall's store. Like the native shacks, it was but a shell, sheet-metal without, bare timbers within. A counter, a row of shelves, an array of canned goods, a showcase of tobacco, a few barrels.

"Rather a shabby place," thought Amos.

As if to answer his thought Rounsvall said: "Not much in it. Keep a few supplies for the sponging fleet. My money," patting the roll in his pocket, "comes from sponges. We will get at them in the morning. You will see for yourself." Turning away from the store, he added, "come over to my house," leading the way across the sandy path under the coconut trees.

Rounsvall's house was something better than the store. There was a pretense of comfort about it with its wide screened veranda, its high white ceilings, its soft bed, and yet Amos scarcely slept that night. There was something strange about this business, something not quite right. But toward morning, when he finally fell asleep, he had no more inkling of what it was than before.

Nor did the next few days bring him any light. Each morning he went out in the *Oriole* alone, with Jim and Bill. Under their directions he laid his course for the Gingerbread Grounds, and when Jim gave the signal he brought the boat to a stop and dropped the hook. While he watched, his crew snugged down the canvas. Then, after stripping, they dived down with knives in teeth. Leaning over the side, Amos watched their movements through the clear water as they cut loose armfuls of the weedylike growths. Over a minute passed before they shot up, leaving a stream of silvery bubbles in their wake. Depositing their load over the low waist of the little vessel, they breathed deeply for a few minutes, then turned loose their hold on the rail and dropped down, feet foremost. When they had sunk about fifteen feet below the surface they turned and with leisurely strokes swam to the bottom and repeated the performance. Amos soon saw that the whole secret of the diver was deliberate movement to conserve his energies and thereby use the least possible amount of oxygen.

But slow as their underwater movements appeared to Amos it took the two divers only an hour to clear the spot about the boat. Then Amos heaved

up the anchor, and with the two negroes clinging to her sides, the *Oriole* drifted a few hundred yards with the tide to a new place.

Thus as the warm days passed, Amos grew more and more fond of this easy, carefree life. His hard days at home in the bleak cold country he had left became like the memory of an unpleasant dream. His interest in the *Oriole* now occupied all his attention. Each night he sailed her back with her deck load of the wet, soggy piles of living sponge, that strange life almost vegetable, near animal, which had to die before the skeletons were of any value.

The more he sailed the little schooner, the more his admiration and affection grew for her. She would sail with a free sheet before the steady trade wind down to the Gingerbread Grounds in the morning, a bone in her teeth, a ripple from her fore foot, a gurgling hiss of water along her bilges. Close-hauled, she danced along on the long and a short tacks, her decks a-slant, her lee rail buried in foam, beating up to windward as she worked back to Single Shot Cay at night.

His liking grew into a love almost that of a man for a woman. He wanted to own her. These suspicions could all go to blazes. Surely a downeast Yankee could take care of himself in this easy-going place. And there was money in it, a far better living than he ever could make at home. He put the earnings of the *Oriole* on the old fisherman's basis. These he divided into thirds, one to the schooner, one for himself and the other third between Jim and Bill. They seemed well satisfied with their lay. There was no question of their willingness to work. They were good, steady divers and could work in as deep as eight fathoms of water. And they liked him.

Amos was pleased to hear Bill, who was the more reserved of the two, say one day: "Cap'n, you sure do treat us black mons right. I lak work for you more than any one else I ever dive' for."

If he but owned the *Oriole*, Amos thought, he could do well. He could go anywhere, find the best sponging grounds, work them himself, dispose of them in Nassau at a far better figure than Rounsvall offered. Yes, if he could but buy her. Rounsvall's actions had been all right up to now. His suspicions were evidently unfounded. Gradually his distrust of him disappeared, and one day when the latter broached the subject of sale Amos closed the deal.

The negotiations were briefly transacted in Rounsvall's store. Amos put down three hundred dollars on the schooner with the promise to pay the rest from the sponges as he gathered them. Rounsvall seemed glad to get rid of the schooner. He had interests in other boats which would occupy all his time, he said. With the *Oriole* Amos took on her crew of Bill and Jim as he had planned.

It was a fair morning when the *Oriole* put off for her first day's work under her new ownership. Rounsvall was at the dock to wave a word of good luck. The crew hoisted the sails. Amos stood at the helm and guided his course for the now familiar Gingerbread Grounds. Soon the *Oriole* was passing over the outer reef into the protected area. Long before night the deck was loaded and the schooner sailed into Single Shot Cay with a good day's showing. To Rounsvall's remark that his first day spoke well for his luck Amos replied confidently, "Twon't be so long until the *Oriole* is all mine."

And thus Amos and his crew continued for two months. Little by little the book that each day carried the total amount Amos owed on the *Oriole* crept nearer and nearer to a balance.

Bill and Jim were a good pair. The air of reserve, the uncertain feeling that Amos had felt at first, began to dissipate. But still at times when they were slowly beating homeward after a day on the grounds, when the sun was sinking and the long lines of sea birds stretched out over the horizon, homeward bound also after a day's fishing on the banks, then they relaxed. With the helm lashed, the *Oriole* sailing herself, Amos sitting on the deck house, Bill and Jim stretched out on the after deck, they laughed and joked with one another. Amos told of the hard life on the banks, of the liners crashing eastward through the fog adding to the many dangers of the fisherman's life. In turn Bill and Jim spun tales of pearl finds, and of the days when only a hard-fighting crew and a fast boat could successfully carry a load of hawksbill turtle shell to Nassau without being robbed on the way.

At these times the feeling of reserve between master and crew almost broke down. Still, Amos felt that there was something they wanted to tell him. What it was he had no idea. All arrangements seemed satisfactory and straight. Nor could he tell by Rounsvall. True, there was a slight hesitancy about the man that Amos could not fancy, but he seemed as pleased with the loads of sponges as Amos himself.

The *Oriole* was almost paid for. Two weeks, perhaps less at the present rate, and Amos would close the account book, his debt settled.

His doubts were almost quieted until one morning when they were starting out for the sponge banks he looked for the little book. Search as he would among his lockers, there was no sign of it. All the receipts, his contract with Rounsvall, the schooner's papers were in it. He usually stayed aboard the *Oriole* but had slept the night before at Rounvall's house. Perhaps he had left it there, but he had no clear recollection of taking it with him when he left the schooner.

"Ah, I must have," he thought. It would be all right. No use worrying. He would get it when he returned that night.

But the *Oriole* did not return that night, for

about three o'clock a flat calm fell and she lay at her moorings in a little cove a quarter of a mile from the shores of an island. She seemed to float like a mirage on the unruffled surface of the clear water. The sun sank, night fell, the stars came out. Amos sat on deck, waiting until almost midnight, but no breeze stirred. Tired and worried, he finally flung himself on his bunk and dropped into an uneasy sleep.

Two hours later he was awakened by a queer, throbbing noise. The night was still. Not another sound broke the silence except a steady, insistent throb, throb. There was an eerie, uncanny monotony about it that he could not fathom, never having heard anything like it before.

He got up and went on deck. His crew was gone. There was but one of the two dinghies left. Amos looked toward the shore. There, faintly visible through the jungle, came the glow from a fire. He listened and above that distant beat he barely heard the sound of voices singing a chant that kept time to the beating of the drum.

Then he remembered—this was the fire dance of the natives. He had heard Bill and Jim speak of it. They would be there. A slight whisper of a wind fanned his cheek. The morning breeze was rising although there was as yet no sign of sunrise. There would soon be a sailing breeze and he must get the *Oriole* under way. How long his crew would linger at the dance he could not tell. It were better to go after them than to wait.

He pulled up on the painter of the dinghy, brought the boat alongside, jumped in, and rowed ashore. After making his line fast to a chunk of coral on the beach, he made his way along a dim path toward the glow of the fire.

As he approached, the beating of the drums became more distinct and took on a sharper metallic note. When at last he stepped into the clearing he saw that the drums were but five-gallon tin gasoline cans. A dozen negro natives sat thumping them in unison with their hands. A circle of half-nude men and women danced around the fire, two and two. They were wrought up by the wild beating of the drums. In their gleaming white eyes glowed the wild light of savagery. Civilization had merely glossed over the surface of these people. The strain of the Carib, the Spaniard, and the African jungle was coming out.

And Bill and Jim, stripped to their waists, sweat standing out on their foreheads, their muscles rippling under shining skins, danced and sang around the fire like two savages. They did not notice his approach. He remained in the shadows and watched this primitive performance with interest.

After a time he noticed that his crew were evidently not in very good standing with the other natives, for they gave them fierce scowls when in the course of the dance they passed and repassed them. Looking around for a reason for this behavior, he distinguished among the dancers a native girl different from the others. She was of a lighter color, the Spanish strain predominating. A wild, flaming creature, lithe and supple, her body flowed and swayed in sinuous, undulating movements vibrant with life. There was that flash to her eyes, that taunting smile on her face, that reckless abandon to her movements, all telling of that age-old appeal that was far older than men's reasoning.

For a moment even Amos with his sturdy puritan background was lost in fascination by that barbaric appeal. Then above the witching of her smile, above the hypnotic rhythm of the drums, his reverie fled as he again turned his attention to his crew. They undoubtedly had fallen under the spell of those witching eyes. Their advances had apparently been met with favor, for the rest of the dancers had been aroused to a fighting pitch of jealousy.

Sullen looks and muttered threats were changing into action. There was the flash of a knife, a loud curse as a big negro, stripped to the waist, jumped toward Bill and Jim. Amos saw Bill grasp a sinewy wrist and with a deft jerk bring it over his shoulder. The drums stopped. There was a moment of tense silence followed by a distinct grating pop accompanied by a wild scream of agony as the big man fell to the ground, writhing with the pain of a broken arm.

Then the crowd closed in. A babble of shouts and curses, women screaming and running, all but the woman who was the cause of the trouble. She stood off to one side, her bosom heaving, her eyes flashing.

She called out imperatively: "Don't get down, now—don't get down. They kill you!"

Amos soon saw what she meant. Once the two friends battling fist and skull, back to back, were swept off their feet, they would be at the mercies of the mob. Already he could see the dull white glint of sharp, ragged lumps of coral rock in the hands of the assailants as they waited for a chance to use these cruel weapons.

Seizing a half-burned cudgel from the fire, Amos scattered the blaze and jumped into the mêlée. This new attack from the rear disconcerted the attackers. There was a loud crack, crack.

Amos yelled, "Gangway! Gangway!"

The crowd hesitated for a moment, confused. It was one thing to fight in the light, but now that the fire was but a few scattered brands, it was hard to distinguish friend from foe in that dim light.

This confusion lasted for only a few moments, in which time Amos gave some telling blows. Then the crowd broke from around Jim and Bill and closed in about him. He plied his club so vigorously that again the crowd wavered. The other two had dispersed their assailants by the help of the distraction which Amos offered, and now worked up to a fighting frenzy came to their captain's rescue.

Jim had a moment to open his sheath knife. Bill picked up the one that lay beside the groaning figure on the ground. With these effective weapons they bore down on the men knotted around just outside the reach of Amos' club. At the sight of these two, which a sudden flickering flame revealed, leaping down on them with bared knives on one side and the steady, remorseless swing of the club on the other, their courage vanished. They scattered and fled into the darkness. The sound of their flight through the palmetto scrub grew fainter and fainter.

Not satisfied with this, Bill and Jim were anxious to pursue and wreak vengeance on their assailants, but Amos' cooler judgment prevailed and he led the way back to the beach. His head throbbed where a glancing blow from a club had thumped it. A thin trickle of blood ran down his arm from a knife cut. But he didn't mind. It was a grand battle. It reminded him of the days long past of other fights. He wasn't so old yet that the love of battle had died entirely in him. And as he entered the battle he had caught a gleam of approbation from the girl. No, he concluded, he wasn't so darned old yet.

Behind him his two men were reliving the battle in excited words. He turned to them. "Come on, boys, let's get aboard. You've had your night of it. The wind is rising. Let's get under way," he kept on as he hurried them unwillingly to the beach. "Let's get away from that crowd."

Bill reassured him: "Don't you worry, cap'n, about that. They got plenty. If we see them in daytime they run like scared goat'."

Amos reproved them: "That's all right about those fellows, but we're here to sponge, not to fight. Get your boat, boys, and I'll get mine."

They had come now to the beach. He crossed it to where he had left the dinghy but he could not find it. He was sure it was in this spot he had come ashore. Puzzled, he walked up the beach a short way, trying to peer ahead into the darkness. As he walked along in the soft sand he almost fancied he heard a creaking of blocks as if a sail was being hoisted out in the darknesss of the cove. Straining his ears to make out this faint sound, he heard Jim call, "Cap'n, something wrong here. My boat gone."

Before answering, Amos listened again for the ghostly sound in the cove, but only the beating of the waves broke the stillness of the night.

Walking down the beach, he met his men. Not wishing to raise any needless sensation, he suggested: "Boys, perhaps the tide's carried them off. Mine's gone, too."

"Cap'n, no tide carry my boat off. I tie' my boat good to a root."

Amos then suggested that they walk around the beach for a short distance and look. It was likely that some of the crowd at the dance had reached the beach before them and carried the boats off in a spirit of revenge. He sent Bill and Jim in one direction; he took the other.

But a search of an hour failed to find them. The dim gray haze of dawn lighted up the eastern horizon; and still no trace of the *Oriole's* boats. It soon became light enough for them to see. Amos anxiously peered out to the mooring place of his schooner. There, out in the middle of the little bay where the *Oriole* had lain the night before, all that was visible of her was three feet of the tip of her mainmast sticking out of the water. A big gray pelican calmly sat upon it and preened himself.

The staggering truth struck home to him. She had sunk at her moorings during the night. How?

He sat down on an edge of coral and thought. Here was a pretty pass. His papers and receipts lost, his schooner down in forty feet of water.

Moodily he sat, his head between his hands. This was the end of the winter's work. It would cost more than he had to raise her, and he had but little money left. The sight of that one forlorn mast head was too much for him. He could not bear to think of that slim spar as a roost for the sea birds above, a mooring place for barnacles below.

Well, there was Rounsvall. He would borrow enough from him to get her up and then pay him back.

"Rounsvall," he thought, and his suspicions of the man returned in full force. His papers, the boats gone, and that slight sound of creaking blocks. Could it be possible? He looked up as a sound in the jungle attracted his notice. Bill and Jim, probably. But no, there were the two coming slowly toward him down the beach, their eyes fastened on the only visible part of the *Oriole*.

Again there was the rustle of the palmetto behind him. The thick scrub parted and the girl of the fire dance emerged.

She smiled broadly and came up to him. "Ah lak you."

Amos wanted to shove her aside angrily, but she continued, "Ah wants to say something."

"Well?" queried Amos.

Glancing at Bill and Jim who had now approached, she said to Amos: "You fights lak a mon. No sneak lak Rounsvall. I wants tell you something. Mr. Rounsvall, he sunk the boat. He was on other side of island last night. He gave a case of gin. He say we have a big dance. By and by you come. One white man, old. You not old," she added coquettishly.

Impatiently Amos broke in, "Go on, tell me about Rounsvall."

"Yes," she continued, "your two black men. When they go, come to dance. He say give ten pound', how much, fifty dollar, if we hit you all three on head and throw to shark. He say no one know what happen to you."

At her first words about the sinking of the *Oriole*

Amos was overcome at the treacherous villainy of Rounsvall. This passed away and a silent rage consumed him His generous mouth narrowed to a thin, hard-lipped line. The muscles in his jaw worked convulsively. There was a look in his eyes that was not good to see.

Angry exclamations had burst from the two negroes. "That mon mean," exclaimed the usually reserved Bill. "Work more than six year' for him and he do me that way. God, that no way for a mon to do. Cap'n, let me tell you. That *Oriole* pretty boat, but bad-luck boat. This three time' she give much trouble. First time a mon from Andros Island, he buy her to sponge, same as you, pay some down. He just make three load' when the compass go wrong and she stick tight between Riding Rocks. Mr. Rounsvall get her off. She not hurt. Then a mon from Berry Islands, he buy her. One night anchor shackle come out of chain. She drift ashore, high wind that night, spring tide, too. Mr. Rounsvall, he got her off again. She not hurt. Mr. Rounsvall always get her back on salvage. Now she sunk on you." He paused and further explained shyly: "Cap'n, I think some time I tell you about all these things. Then I say, 'Oh, you think me one crazy conch.' So I shame to speak about it. Then everything going so good."

During all these words Amos sat grim and silent. There was more of a threat in his silence than in the angry talk of the negroes.

Jim broke in: "Cap'n, by the God, now I see. You square mon. He one damn' crook. I'll say every time, he make trouble so he get her back and sell her again. Last time we beach her to clean her copper he have me bore holes along her keel through the bottom and plug them. He say then that he want drain holes, but now I know what he want them for. I say he knock out those plugs last night."

At this news Amos remembered the noise he had heard of creaking blocks. It was probably Rounsvall's boat leaving after he had been aboard the *Oriole*.

He sat watching the negroes as they cursed among themselves at the news the woman had brought. She was looking at him. He would have to show his gratitude to her.

"Come here," he said as he reached into his pocket and pulled out a handful of silver. "Here's something for you. I'll not forget you. You've done a lot for me and my men. Don't tell any one you've seen us, not a soul." As he spoke to her for a moment his face relaxed.

Hesitatingly she accepted the silver. "It was not for this I tell you."

"I know, I know," he answered bluffly. "But tell no one you've seen us—not a soul."

"No, I tell no person."

"Run along then, and leave us men to decide what to do," he spoke to her as to a child.

"Yes," she said, took a few steps, and stopped on the edge of the bushes. "Ah lak you," and with a smile disappeared.

Amos turned to his crew. Characteristically he had quickly decided upon a course of action. With their hatred of Rounsvall he could count on them as able and willing allies.

"Boys, you get back to Single Shot Cay. You know how best to do it. You can easily get a boat to take you over. Now, never let on that we know a thing about this. Don't let any one give you a drink and make you talk," he admonished severely.

"No, no, cap'n. We know. Rounsvall's trick."

"When you get back act the same to Rounsvall as you always have. That's the best way you'll help me. I'm going across the island now to catch the mail steamer to Nassau. Tell Rounsvall that I was afraid to come back because I sunk the schooner and it's not paid for. Tell him I was afraid to face him. Tell him I've gone back home. Be sure to tell him I was afraid to face him." He arose and reached his hand into his pocket, but Bill stopped him.

"No, no, cap'n. You need your money. Jim and I make out all right until you come back. We likes you, too, cap'n. We tell Rounsvall you afraid, but we know you not afraid of old Beelzebub hisself."

At this display of good will Amos felt sure that he could trust those two. There was a suspicious moisture in his eyes which turned again to a hard, steely glint as he looked beyond the two men to the solitary pole sticking so forlornly above the surface of the water.

With a last word of good-by he plunged abruptly into the scrub. Bill and Jim returned to Single Shot Cay and calmly went back to work for Rounsvall as if nothing had happened, answering his questions about Amos as they had been told. This seemed to satisfy him. He evidently had no suspicions, but then Rounsvall did not know the man with whom he was dealing.

It was before daylight one morning three weeks later that the two negroes were awakened by the sound of Amos' voice at the door of their shack calling them. After the mutual greetings were over a whispered conversation lasted until almost daylight when Amos again disappeared. As usual Bill and Jim went to work picking over the sponges on the beach before Rounsvall's trading store. That day there was an air of suppressed excitement about them which luckily passed unnoticed. Every now and then when no one was noticing them they cast glances at the *Oriole*, which lay at the dock before Rounsvall's store. Except for the sand that lay in the corners of her scuppers and the white incrustation of salt on her spars none could tell she had ever been forty feet below the surface.

Dusk fell. Rounsvall was in his store, standing behind the counter, a satisfied expression on his face. He had several hundred dollars' worth of

sponges ready to ship to Nassau. They had come easy, hadn't cost a cent. There was the matter of three hundred dollars Amos had paid on the schooner, and it hadn't cost him over a hundred dollars to raise her. There she lay safe and sound just outside. Yes, he had turned a pretty smart trick and had scared the Yankee home in the bargain.

A couple of natives broke in on his reverie. He busied himself waiting on them. It grew dark. He drew a box into the center of the floor and stood on it to light the hanging lamp. As he stepped off the box he stood aghast. There, framed in the light of the doorway, stood Amos Witherbee.

Confound that fellow! He was supposed to be gone. What did he want here.

Amos advanced into the store a little unsteadily.

"Evenin', gentlemen," he mumbled, swaying on his legs. There was a distinct smell of strong drink about him. Standing with feet outspread in the middle of the floor, he delivered himself before the astonished Rounsvall.

"Just came back from Nassau. Remembered something. Picture on board the boat. Picture of my wife—only one I got. Wouldn't lose it for anything. Was going to get some one to dive it up for me. Saved me the trouble. Found it in the cabin. Down in the hold, too. Found something else. *Oriole* shunk, *Oriole* floats. Dashed funny bird, *Oriole*."

Rounsvall started. This was decidedly uncomfortable. Thought he was shut of that fellow. Now he turns up; been aboard, too, and below decks. Wonder how much he knew. That would never do.

Motioning to two of the negro customers to come outside, he gave them directions to tow the *Oriole* out into the bay and anchor her. Then he came back into the store. Amos had produced a bottle. There were a dozen or more men grouped around him now.

"Drink it up, boys," he invited. "More where it comes from. Good fellowsh. Shympathy. Funny place; lots of funny things here. Lots of bad luck. *Oriole* bad luck, too. First she goes ashore, then she goes high and dry on the rocks, then she sinks. Funny Mr. Rounsvall keeps such a bad-luck boat. Mystery, deep mystery. Must be a ghost." Amos was evidently at the talkative state of drunkenness, thought Rounsvall as he listened in some discomfiture to all this harangue. There was no telling what the man might say.

Now he presented as an afterthought to the crowd, "Letsh all go aboard, search her, catch ghost."

The crowd was sufficiently exhilarated now to enjoy the drunken notion. They started for the door.

In haste Rounsvall stopped them. "Here, boys, never mind this man. He's a little bit done for. He's my friend, though. I'll take care of him. Closing up time now, anyhow," and with his usual friendly businesslike air he ushered them out and closed the door.

Amos was still on the subject. "Must go aboard. Something funny. Where are all my friends, good fellowsh?"

Rounsvall thought quickly. He must humor him about going on board the boat. That could be a means of getting rid of him. It would never do to have him around here. He didn't know how much Amos suspected. An investigation was the last thing he wanted. Amos had already said too much. An official investigation would never do. He must silence him. Dead men tell no tales.

In his befuddled state it would be easy to get him out into the bay, slip the knife into him. The sharks would dispose of the evidence.

So linking his arm in Amos', he said, "Yes, yes, come aboard and we'll see that ghost and settle him."

Willingly Amos allowed himself to be led down to the wharf. With docility he clambered into the bow of the boat. Rounsvall took the oars.

"Get into the stern," he ordered.

But Amos was obstinate. "No, I want to sit here; better view."

Rounsvall gave in to the drunken wish. Anything to get it over with. He bent to the oars and rowed toward the *Oriole*, swinging at her anchor out in deep water a short distance from shore.

Half way out he stopped and listened. There was not a sound from the village. The boom of the surf beyond the harbor mouth sounded clear through the still air. A sea bird screeched overhead wtih a cry like a lost soul. It startled him. But, no, he mustn't weaken. He must do it. He gave a quick glance over his shoulder at Amos, sitting in a formless lump hunched up in the bow. Just one swift stroke. There would never be a sound to alarm the settlement.

No time like the present. Rounsvall reached into his sheath for his knife. His sheath was empty.

Curious. He was sure he had had it when he left the store. He must have dropped it on the beach. Oh, well, a belaying pin would do in its stead. So again he bent to the oars and soon reached the side of the schooner.

Climbing over the rail, he dragged Amos after him, shoved him up against the side of the cabin and went forward to the foremast to get a belaying pin from the pin rack.

When he came back Amos had managed to make his way down into the cabin. He could hear him striking matches, trying to light the lantern. Quickly Rounsvall followed him, his belaying pin ready. Just as he reached the bottom of the companionway Amos had lighted the light. A glint of steel in his hand caught Rounsvall's eye as he ap-

proached. He was toying clumsily with the lost knife. Rounsvall stopped.

Amos grinned foolishly. "Losh your knife in boat. Good knife. Think I keep it. Might see the ghost."

Rounsvall sized up his man. Even though drunk as he appeared it would never do for him, armed only with a belaying pin, to tackle that husky-looking old man with that knife in his hand. He hesitated for a moment. He'd have to do something. His man was out here. Now was the opportunity to get rid of him. He could not let him go ashore again. He could easily get into the dinghy and leave him on the ship. This was the only way in which there would be absolutely no risk. Like a flash it came to him: Sink the *Oriole*, leave Amos on board alone.

Accordingly he slipped down into the hold by the stairs that led from the cabin. He was gone but a few minutes. When he returned Amos was standing up at the little table. The companionway slide was closed. Amos was sober as a judge.

With his gray eyes glinting dangerously he said in a hard voice:

"Well, Rounsvall, here is where we settle accounts. Ye forgot I told ye I never drank a bit of gin. Poured it on my coat; led ye astray. Neat trick you played on me, only you rather overdid yourself. I hear the plugs are out once more. The *Oriole* is settling fast. The hatches are closed and wedged from the outside. I have the key to the cabin door in my pocket."

At a movement from Rounsvall he answered calmly:

"No, you needn't rush me. It will just hurry matters. I took the trouble to borrow your knife." Amos produced for the second time the wicked-looking, double-edged dagger. "I didn't ride in the bow of the dinghy for fun. Your back was turned and your sheath came mighty handy to me. And now ye have just come to the end of your rope yarn. When the vessel sinks this time we both sink with her."

At these words Rounsvall turned wildly about and began beating on the door with his fists. "And by the way," said Amos unmoved, "when ye were below I took the trouble to cast the dinghy adrift so ye can plainly understand that even if ye get out ye can't go ashore till this business is thoroughly settled."

With a pretense of calmness Rounsvall sat down nervously opposite him. From below came the ominous swish, swish of water as the *Oriole* slowly swayed from side to side. It was mounting higher and higher. Across from him Amos sat in stoic unconcern. To think that this old fellow had trapped him! But trapped he was. There was no sign of weakness about Amos. Grim, silent he sat there while the vessel each minute drew nearer to the final plunge. Rounsvall jumped up and started frantically below.

The knife barred his way. "God, man, she'll sink"; he shouted up into the implacable face.

"I reckon she will," was the calm reply. "But when she does ye'll not be the one to raise her this time."

Finally Rounsvall wilted. The yellow streak in him came to the surface. "What do you want? Name your price. Hurry, now—hurry."

"Well," said Amos casually, "I have a bit of paper I had a lawyer feller fix for me when I was in Nassau. The meaning of all the legal words is that ye are to charter me this vessel for the period of twenty-five years for the sum of a dollar a year, and other good and valuable considerations, meaning your worthless hide, I suppose. Not being a British subject, I can't purchase her outright, a fact ye well knew I was ignorant of when we made our agreement.

"That's merely the first part. The second part says that owing to the unfortunate luck said *Oriole* has been having, loss of time, mental anguish and so forth, ye are to pay to one Amos Witherbee, known as the party of the second part, the sum of three hundred dollars, which I have very good reason to believe ye have on your person at present.

"And the third part," he went on with a maddening deliberation, apparently disregarding the gurgling of water from below that filled the other with fear, "and the third part says that ye agree to pay yon aforementioned party of the second part the further sum of fifteen hundred dollars for valuable goods delivered. I think he means yon sponges of mine that ye beeen sending to Nassau for the last two months and, as I discovered, only allowing me a scant half their value. Now it's merely that ye have to decide it yourself. Very proper, I consider it."

Rounsvall sneered. "You think you can bluff me, do you?"

Amos smiled. "Listen," he said.

From below came the slush of water. The *Oriole* was filling fast. Another half an hour and down she would go. There was a sharp squealing. A rat, wet and bedraggled, scrambled up the steps from the hold. It gazed with nervous, beedy eyes at the two men for a moment, then with a frantic squeal jumped upon the table and out the open cabin porthole. There came a faint thump as it hit the deck, followed by a splash when it went over the side and into the water.

Rounsvall turned pale. In his craven soul he knew he was beaten. There was nothing he could do. Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out a roll of bills and by hundreds and fifties counted out eighteen hundred dollars. Then, with shaking hand he wrote his name down on the paper which Amos put before him. Grabbing up the lantern, he dashed below. Amos grinned to himself as he

heard him splashing about in the hold. After several minutes he came up dripping wet, the water in the hold having struck him to the waist.

Amos opened the hatch. "Well, we're even now. I'm paid for my sponges and for the money I put down on the schooner. And I still have her."

Up on deck in the open air out of the cabin Rounsvall's courage returned.

"Well, you robbed me of my roll of money, but you'll never get the vessel," he said.

"And why not?"

"Because you have no witnesses to my signature and it was signed by compulsion."

Amos laughed and turned aside. He called out, "Bill, Jim!"

From the shadow of the deck house came the two natives.

"These," explained Amos, "have a score to settle on account of the night of the fire dance. They were watching ye as ye signed yon legal document below. I think they are good witnesses. Would ye like to have that old score out with them?"

Bill and Jim moved closer. In the darkness they were but formless shadows, menacing and terrifying.

Dodging behind Amos, Rounsvall cried out:

"No, no, don't let them at me. Keep them back, keep them back, I tell you!"

Amos laughed scornfully. He put the question to the natives:

"And as for the matter of violence in signing this paper. As ye watched it through the open ports, did either of ye see me use any violence or force on this man?"

"Not a bit, cap'n, not a bit," they both answered.

"Very well, boys. Ye can get the boat out from under the stern now, and I have no doubt Mr. Rounsvall would be glad to go ashore."

As the noise of the oars died away Amos laughed aloud:

"A clever trick of Bill's, that of clapping the box over a rat in the hold. I wasn't sure it would work when the water floated it off. But it worked like a charm."

Then turning, he looked affectionately aloft to where the mastheads of his schooner swayed gently against the starlit sky.

"Well, old girl," he said softly. "Ye have a new master now, and ye will not be a partner to another shady deal for many a long year."

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